DISCOURSES,

&c.

ON

SEVERAL SUBJECTS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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&c.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

DISCOURSES,

&c.

ON

SEVERAL SUBJECTS.

BY THE

LATE REV. CHRISTOPHER WELLS, B. D.

FORMERLY FELLOW OF JESUS COLLEGE, OXFORD; AND AFTERWARDS RECTOR OF REMENHAM, BERKS.

VOLUME I.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY J. BONSOR, SALISBURY SQUARE:

AND SOLD BY

MESSRS. LEIGH AND SOTHEBY, SOUTHAMPTON STREET;

AND

F. AND C. RIVINGTON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD.

1800.

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1800.

20/4/46

DEDICATION.

To Mrs. * * * * *.

My beloved Margaret,

By the death of the beſt of brothers and of friends, the dear companion of my whole life almoſt, (ſuch an one how few can boaſt!) Mr. Wells's Papers and Sermons falling into my hands, I could not but very earneſtly wiſh to preſerve ſome of them. My ever beloved brother valued them very highly, and once thought of publiſhing a few of them, after reviſing and correcting them for the preſs; which he was particularly qualified for doing; and the more ſo,

as, in his view of things, his ſimplicity of character and diſpoſition, and calmneſs of temper, he reſembled Mr. WELLS in a great degree, no leſs than in his great learning, and his love of the holy ſcriptures, which were his daily ſtudy. All theſe qualifications would have fitted him entirely for the undertaking: but ill health ſoon diſcouraged him, and at laſt diſabled him, even from making a beginning. This being ſo, it ſeemed to me that (with all the incorrectneſs, &c. which the Papers naturally muſt have, whoſe author never intended them for the public eye) the *thoughts* of ſuch a man ſhould not be loſt; and being encouraged by you, my deareſt child, who knew the value of them, and how highly they were eſteemed by two ſuch excellent characters as your dear father and beloved father by adoption were; with this encouragement from you, my beſt remaining treaſure in this world, I at firſt intended to have had a few copies printed only, for the advantage of the remaining friends, whom it has pleaſed God ſtill to continue to me; but afterwards,

wards, for ſome reaſons of my own, which you concurred in thinking of ſome weight, I have ventured (with the aſſiſtance of a friend,* who has taken all the trouble of *managing* it for me) to have ſome of them not only printed but *published;* leaving them to ſpeak their own worth.

To whom can I ſo properly addreſs theſe reaſons for ſuch an attempt, (entirely unqualified as I am, and at ſo advanced a period of life) as to you, my deareſt child, without whoſe encouragement I hardly could have had ſpirits or reſolution to have done this? You were the dear ſympathiſer under my ſoreſt trial; who, in a manner, forgetting your own affliction, with the pureſt affection gently endeavoured to ſoothe and raiſe my dejected mind: you, who muſt moſt ſenſibly have felt your own great loſs of your kind inſtructor from your infancy; gently leading your young and tender mind to the knowledge of the Chriſtian religion, and to all goodneſs, by the beſt

* The Rev. JOHN PRINCE.

beſt of examples as well as by precept; encouraging your deſire of all knowledge that might be of uſe to you through life. In a word, you and I only can know the excellency of the inſtruction, as well as the ſimple manner of conveying it.

But this is a theme which I could for ever expatiate upon! Our loſs is irreparable.—God's will be done! May God for ever bleſs, protect, and direct you, my beloved MARGARET, prays moſt fervently,

24 OC 62

Your always affectionate

E. C.

Jan. 1, 1800.

SOME ACCOUNT
OF THE
AUTHOR.

THE Rev. Christopher Wells, the author of the following *Discourses* and *Letters*, was born in Wales, of humble parents. He had, however, a liberal education; was of Jesus College, Oxford, and an excellent tutor there for some years. He was esteemed a very good preacher in that University. Being afterwards Rector of *Remenham*, near *Henley upon Thames*, he was recommended by Simon, Lord Harcourt, as tutor to James Cocks, Esq. by whom he was greatly valued; being highly sensible of the great advantage he had received from Mr. Wells's most affectionate care and attention to him; the bene-

ficial effects of which were evident to all that knew the great change wrought in him; having unfortunately had for a tutor before a man little known at the time; his opinions and character not at all. He was wholly unprincipled in reſpect of morality as well as religion; being unwearied in his endeavours to pervert his pupil's judgment, and to corrupt his mind. He very early began by flattery, and every undue means, to acquire an aſcendency over him; and, the more to ingratiate himſelf, introduced him to the world too early, and to perſons and places very improper for him; and, by continual inſinuations againſt his guardians, added to all the other means, he had ſo far ſucceeded in gaining his pupil's favour, as to make it a matter of great difficulty (though abſolutely neceſſary) to remove him; and place him with a perſon capable and deſirous of eradicating from his tender mind the pernicious effects of ſo wretched a ſyſtem. Mr. Wells was exactly qualified for a taſk ſo arduous: for, with a mildneſs and ſweetneſs almoſt peculiar to himſelf, he not only convinced him of the bad effects which muſt naturally

naturally result from the notions he had ſo early imbibed; but, by degrees, inculcated the principles of true religion and virtue ſo ſtrongly into his mind, that he ever after was regarded as a young man of an excellent character.

By means of this connection, Mr. Wells became acquainted with ſeveral of my brothers; with two of them particularly, Joſeph and Philip. (excellent indeed they were!) Mr. W. perceiving this, from his own goodneſs, became a voluntary tutor and moſt affectionate friend to both; which they juſtly prized, as it deſerved, *more than thousands of gold and ſilver*; and ever eſteemed it one of the greateſt bleſſings of their lives. If to relate what they did, and aimed to do, for him in return, to ſpeak their praiſe and do them juſtice, would not lengthen the account too much, how heartfelt a pleaſure would it be to me to attempt it! This friendſhip produced a literary correſpondence between them: a ſpecimen of which will be found at the end of the ſecond Volume; among which, is a moſt intereſting ſhort letter to

his pupil. He was, indeed, peculiarly qualified for the moſt important ſituation in life;—an inſtructor of youth: for he had an uncommonly great underſtanding, cultivated, with the utmoſt care, by deep ſtudy; having, from his earlieſt youth, read and conſidered the beſt books, in the Greek language particularly; in which he was allowed to be a moſt accurate ſcholar; which was an advantage in what he ſtudied beyond all other things, the ſcriptures, daily and hourly almoſt; as need not to be mentioned to the reader of theſe papers. And, from his truly chriſtian temper and diſpoſition, added to thoſe other qualifications, he was peculiarly fitted for the ſtudy of divine things. His converſation was indeed delightful; his underſtanding and knowledge, together with a moſt uncommon humility and ſweetneſs of temper, were ever exerted in ſeeking the truth, and leading others to do the ſame almoſt imperceptibly. He died in the year 1765, about 65 years of age.

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E. C.

January 1, 1800.

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DISCOURSE I.

FIRST AND SECOND ADVENT OF CHRIST.

II THESS. I. 10.

When he shall come to be glorified in his Saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.

ADVENT is another word for coming; and the Advent Sundays are appointed by our Church for the remembering chiefly the two great comings of Chriſt: the firſt, when he came in great humility; and the ſecond, "when he ſhall come "in glory; in his glorious majeſty, to judge "the quick;" thoſe who ſhall be living at that time, "and the dead:" when he ſhall come "to be glorified in his Saints, and to be admired "in

DISC. I.

DISC. I. " in all them that believe;" who hope and who wiſh for his appearing. Of both theſe Comings I ſhall ſpeak: and firſt and chiefly of his firſt coming into this world: of which I ſhall ſhew, 1ſt. With how great humility and condeſcenſion this was, and what effect this ought to have upon us.

2dly. That his firſt coming in great humility is that which makes us certain of his ſecond coming in glory and majeſty to judge the world; to reward thoſe who believe in him and love him, and to puniſh thoſe who are not moved by his mercy and goodneſs to repent and to receive him for their Lord and Maſter.

And, firſt of all, I ſhall ſhew with how great humility and condeſcenſion his firſt coming was, and how great an argument this is for us to love him and to receive him for our Lord and Maſter in this life. For this purpoſe I will ſet before you what the ſame Apoſtle ſays in another place;

place; which is very proper for us to consider. DISC. I.
"Let this mind be in you (says St. Paul) which
"was also in Christ Jesus; who, being in the
"form of God, thought it not robbery to be
"equal with God; but made himself of no
"reputation, and took upon him the form of a
"servant, and was made in the likeness of men;
"and, being found in fashion as a man, he
"humbled himself, (though this first was great
condescension, yet he humbled himself still farther)
"and became obedient unto death, even the death
"of the cross. For which reason," he says, "God
"also hath highly exalted him, and given him a
"name, which is above every name; that at the
"name of Jesus every knee should bow, of
"things in heaven, and things in earth, and
"things under the earth; and that every tongue
"should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the
"glory of God the Father. Let this mind be
"in you," he says here, "which was in Christ
"Jesus; who, being in the form of God, thought
"it not robbery to be equal with God." This

DISC. I. may perhaps require ſome explanation. Now our Saviour was before all worlds the eternal ſon of God, and he was God, of the ſame nature or excellence with the Father, as the ſon of man is of the ſame nature with his father, and equal, except that of being a ſon. He ever had and was endowed with the glory of the Father: for which reaſon he prayed before his death, that God would "take him to the glory, which he "had with him before the world began." He made the world; by him all things were created, whether they are in heaven or earth, viſible and inviſible, the higheſt angels and beings above this world: (Col. 1. 16) "All things were created "by him and for him; and he is before all "things, and by him all things conſiſt." It was he, that appeared and made himſelf viſible to man, as we ſee frequently in the Old Teſtament. He took upon him then only the appearance of man ſometimes. When it was upon any *great* occaſions, he appeared with glory and majeſty, as he did upon Mount Sinai, at the giving

of

of the Law, and on many other occaſions. We ſee therefore what is ſaid by the Apoſtle; that, having always been in the form of God, and having appeared with the majeſty and in the name of God, "he did not think it robbery to be "equal with God." Either that he did not think it unjuſt to be equal with God; or it may be underſtood in another ſenſe, which will make no real difference: though he had the glory and the perfections of God and had appeared in his name; yet to appear in this manner was not what he was ſo addicted to, that he could not part with it; for that is ſometimes the meaning of that expreſſion, and it agrees with the place: he was not fond of the glory, or the form of God, that he could not part with it. But he emptied, he diveſted, himſelf of that form of God, and took upon him the form of a ſervant—He came into the world as the ſervant of God, to do his will, "and was made in the likeneſs of man." He became a real man, and being a man, he humbled himſelf yet farther; he did not take the condition DISC. I.

DISC. I. of the powerful or great or prosperous among men. He became subject to poverty, to contradictions, and to contempt; and at last obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. This humble disposition, the whole history of his life, and the history of his birth particularly shews: which was in the poorest manner as to worldly circumstances; and his life went on in the same manner—And therefore this is that coming which we are most of all concerned to consider; for this is what we can understand and see; we may see his life upon earth, as it is written; and it concerns us to consider it, because this is that, which (more than his glory now in heaven) will teach us to love him as our Lord and Master, and from love and duty to do all that he has taught and commanded us to do: which I proposed to shew in the second place.

For this is the thing that concerns us. We should consider what infinite love to man he shewed, when he quitted his glory and the perfection

fection of his nature as far as was poſſible, to come down to men, to loſt and miſerable men, in order to ſave and to bleſs them; and himſelf to become a man, and be content to be called and to call himſelf our brother, an human creature like us. It will do us the greateſt good upon this account, and with this view, to conſider all his life, and all the time of his appearing upon earth from his birth to his reſurrection and his aſcenſion into heaven, which was his return to the glory which he had before the world began. He was born, as you will remember particularly, in the greateſt humility and in the pooreſt circumſtances; with plain marks of his being ſubject to the powers of this world. For it was by means of an order or a decree from the Roman Emperor that the taxing was at this time, which brought ſuch a concourſe of people to the place where he was born, that he was thrown out of that place; that he was born in a manger, "becauſe there "was no room for him in the inn." I mention this now, becauſe this was the beginning, to which DISC. I.

DISC. I. all the reſt of his life will be found to agree. It was for our ſakes, that he ſubmitted to this; to ſhew us firſt of all his love, in that he thought nothing too low on our account, and to teach us the ſame humility; to free us from pride and vanity, and from the love and deſire of worldly things. It was for our ſakes, that he lived in ſuch poverty, that he could ſay, "though the "foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had "neſts," yet "he," now he was the Son of Man, "had not where to lay his head." We ſee that it was a ſuffering life that he led: that he was in perpetual labour and fatigue, moving from place to place, in order to do good; ſhewing his divine power to heal, and to ſave from bodily diſtempers, in order to convince us of his power to forgive ſin, and to heal and to ſave us in a better way, in our ſpirits and in our ſouls. He came at laſt to *die* for us; to ſuffer for us thoſe agonies which God had laid upon him; and which it was neceſſary that he ſhould ſuffer, that we might ſee how great our guilt is, and how ſevere the juſtice of God,

God, which could not remove that cup of bitterneſs from him—*To die* was leſs; for when he had gone through this agony, in which he was oppreſſed, and wanted an angel to ſupport and comfort him, he went to death with cheerfulneſs. It is to my purpoſe, at this time, to obſerve theſe things; becauſe it is his life upon earth, as I ſaid, and theſe things in it eſpecially, that ſhew us, how much he did and ſuffered for us; how infinite his love to men was, which induced him to come into the world; and, that ſeeing his love, we may be moved, if poſſible, to love him again for what he has done; and to do what he has taught and commanded us. DISC. I.

2. Having conſidered (ſo far) this firſt coming of our Saviour, which is indeed truly ſaid to be in great humility; it is ſtrange, and it ought indeed to appear ſo to us, that the true, the only proper Son of God; he, who had the fulneſs of the divine nature and excellence, by whom the world and all creatures were made; that he ſhould come down

DISC. I. down to this earth, to visit us, and to be seen as a real man; to *be* a real man; by taking our real nature upon him, and by being joined to us, to have all our infirmities *without sin;* to suffer for our sins more than we suffer for them, to be more afflicted than the sons of men are: it is strange! It shews the goodness of the divine nature, or rather perhaps the greatness of the divine nature, if we were capable of judging it: but indeed we are not: we cannot conceive such goodness, such condescension to be great: it is too much for us! But this, however, we see; that he, who was the most excellent person that ever was in this world; that he was born and lived in this manner, such as is described and related in the scriptures, and is well known; and that it was for us he suffered so much, there is no doubt; and we know that now he is in heaven, and that he is our Lord and Master. We may see reason from this at least to love him, and to devote ourselves to him above all other names—we must see reason from this to follow his example, when it is expected

expected ſhat we ſhould follow it, and to love thoſe virtues eſpecially, which he hath ſet before us in his life, and in his example. We ſhould not be deſirous of worldly things; we ſhould not deſire worldly honour or greatneſs, which he deſpiſed. If we love honour and greatneſs, he will give us what is great hereafter, and what is worthy of him to give. We ſhould not deſire or ſet our hearts on riches, which he lived without—We ſhould value them only as what may be neceſſary for us in this life—We ſhould not deſpiſe or neglect the poor; for he was poor himſelf—We ſhould be kind, gentle, merciful, and forgiving; for which we can want no greater reaſon, than that he hath forgiven us. All ſin, intemperance, riot, and ſenſuality are contrary to him, and are unworthy of thoſe who profeſs his name. Theſe things will prepare us, in ſome meaſure, to hope for and to expect his coming again, which is certain. We may certainly know that he will come again in glory and majeſty, as the real Son of God; in ſuch glory, as is ſuitable to him. We DISC. II.

may

DISC. II. may know this, becauſe he came before with ſufferings and in great humility; as certainly it was, and that he has not had his reward yet. For, though he is in heaven, exalted to the right hand of God, to the glory and happineſs which he always had—yet he has not yet had the honour due to him in this world; which is too plain. He muſt come therefore to be acknowledged and feared by thoſe who would not acknowledge him, to obey his commands. He has not yet had his full reward; which will be to make thoſe happy, who love him and follow after righteouſneſs in this life.

DISCOURSE

DISC. II.

DISCOURSE II.

CHRIST THE SAVIOUR OF SINNERS.

MATTHEW I. 21.

She shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS; *for he shall save his people from their sins.*

IF Jesus is a Saviour, that will save us from sin, he will save us besides from the consequences of sin, which are misery and the evils and infirmities of this life; and give us a remedy against these, or suffer them to continue with us no farther than as they may be necessary or best for us. When a divine person has taken human nature upon him; has himself been content to

bear

DISC. II. bear all our infirmities, to live with us, to ſuffer all the hardſhips and afflictions to which we can be ſubject, and at laſt to die for us, if we do not miſtake the bleſſings for which he came, we cannot expect too much: and it is probable that it is only by not having a ſufficient and worthy ſenſe of his ſalvation, that we can loſe it: for this reaſon he himſelf ſo much required *faith*; that is, a high and worthy opinion of him, before he would confer thoſe bleſſings of the healing the ſick, the lame, the blind, which he thought proper to give, firſt, as indications of a power to ſave and bleſs in nobler and higher things: for which reaſon, therefore, it is likely that he requires the ſame faith, the ſame hope and expectations from him: for of the higheſt hope and expectation we have juſt grounds, if we conſider both together, that he is a divine perſon, and that he is come into the world, born a real man; and has taken our nature upon him with all its infirmities, ſin only excepted; that he may have a right to redeem us and ſave us in the higheſt

higheſt ſenſe. If he is a real man, we cannot ſuppoſe him to be indifferent to us; or not to have "a ſenſe of all our infirmities;" and, if he is a divine perſon, we know that nothing is too ſtrange or too great to be expected from him. For in that word, according to all our natural notions, all power and all goodneſs is included. The queſtion can be only whether for men in particular he will exert and ſhew this power and goodneſs in any great degree: for of this we cannot naturally be afraid: but when a divine perſon is content to take our nature itſelf upon him, and to join himſelf to us in the moſt real manner, we can then have no doubt of his intention: we may, indeed, miſtake the *kind* of bleſſings which he is to give; and may hope for things, which he has not promiſed; or we may miſtake the time, as the Apoſtles themſelves did ſo often, and be impatient to receive in our own time what he will give us only when he thinks fit. Excepting this, we cannot raiſe our thought too high; we cannot really expect too much from a Saviour, who is a man

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DISC. II. and yet divine: and every thing which we ſee in ſcripture, the prophecies before his coming, or the real facts afterwards, all agree to give us that juſt and worthy notion and hope which it is neceſſary that we ſhould have.

It will, therefore, be proper to ſhew in what ſtyle this ſalvation is ſpoken of, and in what manner it appears to us by the real facts and hiſtory. It will be proper to ſhew, at another time, that it muſt needs affect all who believe it: for, in whatever condition we are, it muſt appear to be a happineſs and bleſſing above any thing that we have: for which reaſon it is not neceſſary always to ſhew men their real condition; but the moſt ſatisfied, the moſt happy and proſperous, in all reſpects, may very well be ſenſible of it and deſire it. It does not want miſery or afflictions to recommend it, but it is ſuch a light even at noonday, in the greateſt of human proſperity and ſatisfaction, that ſuch perſons are often ſurprized with it, and ſee by this appearing to them on the ſudden,

ſudden, what they never ſaw before; the weakneſs or miſery of the condition which they were in. But it is the more uſual from a deep ſenſe of ſin or miſery, to be forced to ſeek for remedy; and, not finding any other ſufficient, to accept and embrace this: and it is very proper that we ſhould know, 1ſt. What the condition of human nature is: which I ſhall endeavour to ſhew in ſome reſpects; that we may know that a divine ſalvation and a Saviour is indeed wanted; or that there are many, or the greateſt evils, which cannot by any human means be remedied: for which reaſon therefore the views of a divine Saviour, if there is ſuch a one, muſt needs be acceptable to us, and received with joy: and firſt, in reſpect of ſin itſelf, it will appear that men of themſelves, and by whatever human means, are not able either to atone for ſin committed, or to free themſelves from the power of it: that we are not able of ourſelves, by any human means, to atone for ſin or to make ſatisfaction for it, I ſuppoſe will eaſily appear, if the other indeed is true, that we are DISC. II.

DISC. II. not able to be free from the power of it ſtill reigning within us, and forcing or drawing us continually into freſh ſins: for, upon this ſuppoſition, it is plain, that, while we are continually committing freſh ſins, we can never atone or make amends to God's juſtice for thoſe that are paſt: for, if we could think that by any good actions we could merit or atone, yet, by continual or frequent ſins, it is to be feared that we increaſe our debt more than by our good actions we diſcharge it: ſo that in this manner we can never be clear. But if we are able to deliver ourſelves from the power of ſin; if we can ſay at any time, that now we commit none, which is to ſay, that "we love God with all our heart and with all our "mind;" that we regard him continually in all our actions; that we love our neighbour with as real and ſincere an affection as we do ourſelves; (for God judges not the actions only, *but the affections of the heart)* if we could think this *now*, yet certainly we have not always been ſo: we "have been ſometimes diſobedient, deceived,

"ſerving

" ſerving our own will and pleaſures, being in DISC. II.
" malice and envy, hateful, and hating one ano-
" ther." If now we do all that is required of us, we do no more. We have no merit for ourſelves or for others; we have nothing *over*, that can atone for ſins paſt: we can make no ſatisfaction for them, nor can we have any aſſurance ourſelves that they will be forgiven or forgotten. If we did not know that another remedy has been provided; that a divine perſon has been in the world, and has taken our ſins upon him, (which is the only means that to ourſelves is fully ſatisfactory) we ſhould now be offering ſacrifices as the heathens did, or doing penances and extraordinary things and not required as others do, who do not clearly believe the merit of that real ſatisfaction that has once been made for us. It is true, that upon any ſuppoſition, with the moſt perfect repentance and amendment, we ſhould want an aſſurance of pardon and the forgiveneſs of what is paſt. But this is more clear and plain, if we conſider what is certain, that we are not able

DISC. II. ourſelves, or by any human means, to conquer the ſins to which we are ſubject, or to obtain ſuch a heart and ſpirit, ſuch a devotion to God, as is worthy of him and is juſtly required by him. We cannot do this: all human means fail: we may be able to ſettle and compoſe our outward appearance; we may be able, in general, to reſtrain our actions; but we are not able to give ourſelves a new will and new affections, which are neceſſary: we are not able nor likely, if we truſt to ourſelves only, to preſerve ourſelves even from great ſins, for the root and power of ſelf-will and wrong affection ſtill lies within us; and we are not ſure, without a divine power itſelf, that we ſhall at all times, and upon all occaſions, be maſters of ourſelves, or be able to do what we know ourſelves is right. Here, therefore, a divine Saviour is neceſſary to ſave us, in the higheſt ſenſe, from ſin itſelf, as well as from the guilt and conſequences of it: and if we think that though this cannot be by human means yet it might be in any other, upon ſuppoſition of God's mercy declared, and his

ſtrength

ſtrength his ſpirit promiſed; yet certainly for- DISC. II.
giveneſs and mercy can never be ſo clearly pro-
miſed or made ſo ſure to us, as by a divine perſon
ſuffering and making a real ſatisfaction for us:
and the divine aſſiſtance we can never have ſo
much reaſon to expect, as when we know that a
divine being has joined himſelf to us in the moſt
real manner, and is concerned for us, as for him-
ſelf, to keep us from the power of ſin, if we are
willing to be his and to depend upon him.

2. But though ſin itſelf is without doubt the greateſt evil, and therefore the deliverance from it is the higheſt ſalvation or bleſſing, yet there are other evils, which are great, the pains and griefs, or in general the anxiouſneſs and miſery of this life, from which we may well be glad and wiſh for any power or favour that would deliver us. But of theſe we muſt conſider what it is that we have reaſon and good grounds to expect. It is certain that a deliverance from outward ills, ſuch as ariſe from the condition or the common courſe or order of

DISC. II. this world, is what the goſpel by no means has promiſed to its believers: but in ſome reſpects, and in ſome certain times and circumſtances eſpecially, it has declared that they will have a greater ſhare of them. But the outward ills, the afflictions or diſappointments of the world, even ſorrow and pain itſelf is not of itſelf the greateſt ill. But the greateſt ill in all theſe things is that *temper or diſpoſition, which can neither ſubmit to them with patience nor bear them with ſtrength.* For there is a ſtrength ſometimes in men, even naturally, that will bear ſorrow or pain in a great degree, ſo as not to be miſerable; and true patience or reſignation has a divine comfort with it; will make *even evil ſweet, and the greateſt affliction more happy than idle or wanton* proſperity. Now in this reſpect it is certain firſt of all, and without diſpute, that no human means, no prudence or ability of our own, no outward circumſtances, nor any condition of life, can exempt us from the evils that are unavoidable in the common courſe and order of this world. But every one is ſubject either

either equally to every thing of this kind; or, if ſome conditions are generally free from ſome evils, yet, when this is ſo, there are evils plainly which ſuch perſons are more ſubject to than others are; ſo that, upon the whole, the condition of men is nearly equal. If therefore no ſtate or condition can be exempt from outward ills; if all are ſubject either alike or equally to misfortunes and afflictions; the queſtion is, by what means we ſhall be beſt able to bear them; that if we are afflicted we may not be miſerable either by weakneſs or impatience: we may well ſuppoſe that human means are not the beſt, nor ſufficient at all times, to comfort or ſupport us. It is not human wiſdom and reflection that can beſt do this: for this is weak in the midſt of evils; nor is natural ſtrength ſufficient always. It has its bounds and is not equal to ſome afflictions. It is beſides itſelf an uncertain thing, and depends upon a frame and temper, that is not incapable of being deſtroyed: and it is not at any time the beſt remedy. It can only, and at the moſt, enable us to *bear*. But DISC. II.

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true patience and reſignation, becauſe it is a divine thing, has a ſweetneſs that attends it, and diſarms the ill or the misfortune, which our own ſtrength ſtruggles with, or bears without ſatisfaction. True patience and reſignation is a divine thing in its nature; and upon the principles of any true religion is attended with more than human aſſiſtance. But upon the principles of the goſpel, it is certainly more reaſonable than upon any other to expect, that if outward evils come equally; if we cannot be exempt from theſe, becauſe they are indeed neceſſary for Chriſtians and for the world in many reſpects; or if there ſhould even abound more, or there ſhould be ſome particular to the goſpel; yet ſome conſolation and joy will always be given equally, and ſuch as ſhall be ſufficient; which is continually promiſed and in the cleareſt manner: for upon what principles can we expect a real divine aſſiſtance and ſupport ſo naturally, as upon this; that the divine Being himſelf has joined himſelf to man, took our nature upon him, and never has parted with it; yet, while he was upon earth,

earth, he ſuffered whatever afflictions we can have; ſo that he cannot be unconcerned nor inſenſible of ours? And as he has a concern for us, and is repreſented juſtly as ſuffering with us, he cannot refuſe us this beſt means of bearing every thing that he will permit to happen to us. And beſides to conſider that in whatever afflictions we experience, we only partake with him, who himſelf was afflicted; this itſelf, if it is a natural means or only a conſideration of our own, it is certainly the beſt that ever was afforded to men to ſoften and to reconcile them to any evils of this life. DISC. II.

3. And now there is but one reſpect more in which we may ſee the need we have of ſome divine bleſſing and power, ſuch as ſhall be kindly intereſted for us, and do more than we are able by any means, or our own power to do for ourſelves. This is in reſpect of death and the natural terrors of it.—To loſe and to give up this being, whatever it is, without hope of having it again in ſome

DISC. II. ſome other ſtate, and eſpecially if we are now happy and pleaſed, is itſelf a thought that is diſagreeable to human nature; beſides that uncertainty itſelf muſt make it fearful. Now that all human remedies in this caſe are inſufficient will eaſily be allowed: for it is the loſs of all human things, of life itſelf, that is feared: and our underſtanding and reaſon, if it continues with us, is ſeldom able to ſtand alone againſt it: for it cannot, from any general principles, even of religion, give us any aſſurance, even at other times, of what is to come; but with probability is, however, uncertain: ſo this perſuaſion or hope from human reaſon will generally fail at that time. It is by the goſpel, in the higheſt ſenſe, "that life and "immortality is brought to light:" we want its revelation, its promiſes, and its appearances of a future life, and of pardon and acceptance: and even this is not all: we want beſides a real and divine ſupport, which we cannot ſo well expect as from him who we know is a Saviour with divine power to ſave and to bleſs; who himſelf died for us,

us, to make it leſs terrible; and from concern and kindneſs to thoſe who depend upom him, we may reaſonably hope for ſuch real ſupport as will be neceſſary for us at that time. DISC. II.

And now by theſe reaſons we may ſee the need we have of a Saviour, and of ſuch a one as has a divine power to ſave: ſo that what remains will be to ſhew how from repreſentations in ſcripture, both by the prophecies before, and by real facts afterwards, he is indeed ſuch a Saviour as we want.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE III.

PROPHETICAL REPRESENTATIONS OF CHRIST'S SALVATION.

MATTHEW I. 21.

She shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS; *for he shall save his people from their sins.*

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AS I ſaid, that when a divine perſon is come into the world, with a declaration of his being a Saviour, and with that name given him, (for the name Jeſus is *Saviour)* we cannot expect too much, if we know what is really good, and if we expect or hope for it with due diſpoſition: for ſo I think it is true, that we can be diſappointed, only by

by expecting things which are not promiſed, or by expecting what is really good with impatience: and as I think the beſt diſpoſition we can poſſibly have is the higheſt opinion of his power, and will and goodneſs, to ſave and bleſs in all real good, which, I believe, is the faith required;—ſo I ſhall now endeavour to rāiſe this high opinion and this affection towards him as much as poſſible, by repreſenting firſt of all, as I ſaid, in what manner his ſalvation is ſpoken of in the prophets, before his coming, which I ſaid I would conſider firſt; and then afterwards how it appears at the time itſelf, with what ſigns of the greateſt favour, and with what reality of the greateſt bleſſings to men. For theſe I think are the propereſt means to raiſe in ourſelves that opinion of his ſalvation, and our affection to him, which can never be too high; but may admit of miſtakes, which, however, it will be eaſy to guard ourſelves againſt. DISC. III.

1. And firſt for this purpoſe I will mention to you the firſt promiſe that was given of a Saviour, becauſe

DISC. III. becauſe it is a conſiderable one, and proper to give us a juſt conception of what is intended for us. This was juſt after the fall; which was ſuffered by God's providence, but effected by the malice of that evil ſpirit, who delights in ill. When man is ſentenced to death and a great degree of miſery, on this account the promiſe is then made obſcurely, but as was proper at the time; that the ſeed of the woman, one that ſhould be born from her here afterwards, ſhould defeat all the malice of that evil ſpirit, and ſhould remedy all the ills that he had brought on man: for it can be nothing leſs than this which is ſaid, that "the ſeed of the wo-"man ſhould bruiſe the ſerpent's head." This muſt mean, that he ſhould defeat him, and overcome all his evil. How this hope was farther explained and confirmed it is not neceſſary at this time to ſhew; but it is certain that other promiſes were given from time to time, and that ſigns were appointed of this ſalvation in the very religion of thoſe old times, in their ſacrifices, which were given, moſt probably, to repreſent the atonement and

and reconciliation of God to ſinful men, which would be made hereafter. By theſe and by other means, perhaps, more than we have any exact account of, this hope of a divine Saviour to ariſe, who ſhould bleſs man, and redeem him from the miſery of the fall, was kept up. This appears to have been kept up among the Jews at all times; though with different degrees of certainty or clearneſs. We ſee another promiſe made to Abraham, and that his firſt poſterity had this hope, which probably in their long captivity and ſlavery in Egypt was almoſt intirely loſt as well as their religion. When their religion was renewed, it was not only a law given, but it had all the old ſigns and reſemblances of the future ſalvation, and was beſides attended with a preſent ſalvation, and favour and preſence of God, which was a preparation for a divine perſon's coming among them hereafter; and made it the more eaſy and natural for them to receive him. Afterwards and when it was moſt proper, in the times of their affliction, the cleareſt promiſes were given: "a virgin ſhall "conceive

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" conceive and bear a ſon." " There ſhall come " forth a rod out of the ſtem of Jeſſe, and a branch " ſhall grow out of his roots, and the ſpirit of the " Lord ſhall reſt upon him:" " with righteouſneſs " ſhall he judge the poor, and reprove, or plead " with equity, for the meek of the earth." " The " wolf ſhall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard " ſhall lie down with the kid."—" They ſhall not " hurt or deſtroy in all my holy mountain; for " the earth ſhall be filled with the knowledge of " the Lord, as the waters cover the ſeas."—" He " ſhall ſtand as the enſign of the people: to it " ſhall the Gentiles ſeek, and his reſt ſhall be with " glory." (Iſaiah 11.) " For unto us a child is " born, unto us a ſon is given; he ſhall be called " the Mighty God, the Father of the *future age*, " the Prince of Peace. Of the increaſe of his " government and peace there ſhall be no end." " The voice of him that crieth in the wilderneſs, " prepare ye the way of the Lord—make his paths " ſtraight. Every valley ſhall be exalted and " every mountain ſhall be brought low, and the " crooked

" crooked ſhall be made ſtraight, and the rough DISC.
" places ſmooth; and the glory of the Lord ſhall III.
" be revealed." " O Sion, that bringeſt good
" tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O
" Jeruſalem, that bringeſt good tidings, lift up
" thy voice, ſay unto the cities of Judah, Behold
" your God!" " He ſhall feed his flock like a
" ſhepherd; he ſhall gather the lambs with his
" arm, and ſhall carry them in his boſom, and
" ſhall gently lead thoſe that are with young."
" —(40) " The wilderneſs and the ſolitary
" place ſhall be glad; the deſert ſhall rejoice, and
" bloſſom as the roſe." " Then the eyes of the
" blind ſhall be opened, and the ears of the deaf
" ſhall be unſtopped; the lame ſhall leap as the
" hart, and the tongue of the dumb ſhall ſing for
" joy." " In the wilderneſs waters ſhall break
" out and ſtreams in the deſert; and a way ſhall
" be there, which ſhall be called the way of holi-
" neſs: the unclean ſhall not paſs over it; but
" it ſhall be for them only who are called; they
" ſhall not err therein: no lion ſhall be there,

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" nor ravenous beaſt: but the ranſomed of the " Lord ſhall come to Sion with ſongs, and ever- " laſting joy upon their heads; they ſhall obtain " joy and gladneſs, and ſorrow and ſighing ſhall " fly away. (35) How beautiful upon the " mountains are the feet of him that bringeth " good tidings; that publiſheth peace; that " bringeth good tidings of good, that publiſheth " ſalvation, that ſaith unto Sion, Thy God " reigneth! (52. 7) And he ſaid it is a light thing " that thou ſhouldeſt be my ſervant, to raiſe up " the tribes of Jacob and to reſtore the preſerved " of Iſrael: I will alſo give thee for a light to the " Gentiles; that thou mayeſt be my ſalvation unto " the ends of the earth." (49. 7) There the extenſion of God's kingdom to the Gentiles is ſpoken of: " the Gentiles ſhall come to thy light, " and kings to the brightneſs of thy riſing. (60) " The people, that ſat in darkneſs, have ſeen a " light; upon them, who ſat in the region and " ſhadow of death, upon them hath the light " ſhined."—" And it ſhall come to paſs in the

" laſt

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" laſt days, that the mountain of the Lord's houſe " ſhall be ſet up and ſhall be exalted above the " higheſt hills, and all nations ſhall flow unto it; " and many people ſhall go and ſay, Come, and " let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to " the houſe of the God of Jacob, and he will " teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his " paths: for out of Sion ſhall go forth the law, " and the word of the Lord from Jeruſalem." It is for this great ſalvation, the kingdom of God under the goſpel, for which the Pſalmiſt prays, and of which he propheſies at the ſame time: " God be merciful unto us, and bleſs us, and " ſhew us the light of his countenance; that thy " way may be known upon earth, thy ſaving " health unto all nations. Let the people praiſe " thee, O God:—for thou ſhalt judge the people " righteouſly, and govern the nations upon earth. " —God ſhall bleſs us, and all the ends of the " world ſhall fear him." (Pſalm 67) Some other places there are which it will be proper to mention, becauſe they ſhew that the bleſſing of God

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was to appear by a *greater degree of goodness in men*, and that this was chiefly the happineſs and ſalvation which was meant. "Hear now, O "Jacob, my ſervant, and Iſrael, whom I have "choſen: I will pour water upon him that is "thirſty, and floods upon the dry ground. I will "pour my ſpirit upon thy ſeed, and my bleſſing "upon thy offspring. They ſhall grow up among "the graſs, as willows by the water courſes: one "ſhall ſay, I am the Lord's; and another ſhall "call himſelf by the name of Jacob; and another "ſhall ſubſcribe with his hand unto the Lord. (Iſaiah 45) So in that prophecy which our Saviour has applied to himſelf, (Iſaiah 61) "The ſpirit of "the Lord is upon me: he hath appointed me "to preach good tidings to the meek; he hath "ſent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to pro-"claim liberty to the captives; to proclaim the "acceptable year of the Lord; to appoint to them "that mourn in Sion the oil of joy for mourning; "that they may be called plants of righteouſneſs "which he hath planted for his own glory. They

"that

"that ſee them ſhall acknowledge that they are DISC. III.
"the ſeed which God hath bleſſed. For as the
"earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden
"cauſeth the things ſown in it to ſpring forth;
"ſo the Lord God will cauſe righteouſneſs and
"praiſe to ſpring forth before all nations." (Iſaiah 61) "I will ſprinkle clean water upon you, and
"ye ſhall be clean."—"A new heart alſo will I
"give you, and a new ſpirit will I put within
"you"—"and I will cauſe you to walk in my
"ſtatutes, and ye ſhall keep my judgments, and
"ye ſhall be my people, and I will be your God."
(Ezekiel 36. 25)

Theſe are ſome of the prophecies which relate to the bleſſings of Chriſt, and the benefits that are to be hoped from him: and I have only repeated them, or with very little explanation, becauſe I think there is no danger of our miſtaking any of them: and, becauſe as they are in their words, they are the fitteſt for that purpoſe which I mean; which is, as I ſaid, to raiſe as much as

DISC. III. poſſible our opinions of the bleſſings of the goſpel. However reaſonable the goſpel is, and capable of perſuaſion, at leaſt upon its own principles, (for ſo it appears to be moſt conſiſtent and perfectly rational) yet it is evident that the right diſpoſition cannot conſiſt, as goodneſs itſelf does not in perſuaſion only, *but in persuasion with affection suitable to it.* The things themſelves, as well as the perſon, who brings theſe bleſſings, muſt needs require admiration and affection ariſing from it: and this it was that he required ſo juſtly, while he was upon earth, before he would perform his miracles. It was not a belief merely that the miracle would be done, but it was ſuch an opinion of his power and goodneſs, as it was very juſt and reaſonable that he ſhould demand. So now in the goſpel itſelf, the moſt neceſſary diſpoſition is the higheſt admiration and affection to that perſon upon whom all our hopes depend: and the beſt reaſon that can be given why we do not find now the effects which were foretold, and which were ſeen in the beginning, ſeems to be, that we do not

believe

believe nor expect them, but are more inclined *to trust to other means*, with little dependence upon the divine favour or assistance. But the gospel is plainly a divine thing, and ought to be received as the favour, and mercy, and the power of God, ready to assist us: and, while it is received to be divine, there can be no mistake: for then what is said of temporal or worldly things, and may seem in some respects to describe a worldly happiness, will easily be considered to be only images the better to express more real blessings, and more real happiness either in this life, or at another time, when God thinks fit. So that these prophecies are very proper to be read, and to be considered; because in general they are suited to give us worthy conceptions of the blessings of Christ, and the benefits of his coming into the world; that we may have such conceptions of him, as are worthy and just: for there is no danger that we should conceive too much, but, on the contrary, it is for want of DISC. III.

DISC. III. just conceptions; for want of expecting and depending upon him, that we lose the benefit that is offered to us,

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE IV.

CHRIST THE DAYSPRING FROM ON HIGH.

LUKE I. 78, 79.

The Dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

I Said in my laſt diſcourſe, that the goſpel is a *divine* thing: or that it is a *bleſſing* or *ſalvation* the moſt *deſirable* to men; and that this bleſſing, or ſalvation, whatever it is, is by God's own power, and ſuch as we could not be able to obtain or procure for ourſelves. In both theſe reſpects, both as a bleſſing, or ſalvation, and ſuch as comes DISC. IV.

to

DISC. IV. to us from above, it is compared, as juſtly as poſſible, to a light, or to the ſun himſelf riſing by degrees on men, who were before in darkneſs, without hope of recovering from it; as we may add ourſelves, to make the compariſon more like, and as ſeems, indeed, to be implied, when it is ſaid "in darkneſs and in the ſhadow of death:" when this is added, then, if any thing in nature could really be equal to the bleſſings of the goſpel grace, it is certainly this itſelf, which the ſcripture ſo often uſes. But it is ſhort in this, that the bleſſing of this light, which we ſee and enjoy in this world, is not ſo great or ſo conſiderable as the hopes of mercy and favour with God and real happineſs of the mind itſelf. But it is moſt like this and neareſt to it of any thing in this world. And in this it very nearly reſembles, that it is a thing abſolutely ſuperior to man; and, though natural, yet that it is truly divine in this ſenſe, that it is in God's power, not in man's, to make this outward ſun, or day-ſpring to ariſe; which is true of the bleſſing and ſalvation of the goſpel;

and

and what is ſaid here, or implied ſo juſtly and ſo properly by compariſon, is not more than what is ſaid expreſsly by St. Paul, and with great emphaſis, and is the more remarkable, becauſe it is where he is purpoſely ſhewing the very nature of the goſpel which he preached. I do not think, ſays he, that the goſpel is an inconſiderable thing, and not fit to be declared to thoſe in Rome; (where the greateſt power and glory of the world then was) "for it is," ſays he, "the power of God "unto ſalvation to every one who believeth:" and what this divine ſalvation is he explains immediately. For by the goſpel he ſays, a "divine "righteouſneſs, a righteouſneſs or goodneſs in "men, produced by the power of God, was ſhewn "in the world, upon men's believing and receiving "that perſon, who was ſent to bleſs them;" for this is moſt neceſſary to be obſerved; that, as every bleſſing or good requires a certain degree of affection, ſo a bleſſing, or ſalvation, which is divine, requires that which is ſuitable to it; which is the beſt and higheſt affection that we are capable of.

DISC. IV.

DISC. IV. of. There is an affection which belongs to divine things, which it is not perhaps poſſible, or neceſſary, to deſcribe: and becauſe the beſt means to raiſe this affection in ourſelves muſt be to ſhew it as it appears in perſons who were moſt of all poſſeſſed of it, and in the higheſt degree; for this reaſon I did no more, the laſt time, than repeat to you, with very little explanation, the ſeveral expreſſions of it in the Prophets. Firſt of all, and particularly in Iſaiah; recommending it at the ſame time to read yourſelves thoſe paſſages, which relate to the goſpel; which it is eaſy for every one to find, and ſome of which, the moſt ſenſible and affecting, I then repeated; and what I propoſed farther was to ſhew in what manner the ſame goſpel or ſalvation is ſpoken of in the New Teſtament, and how it appears there at this time in its real effects: which I ſhall endeavour now to ſhew, as far as is ſufficient at this time.

In the beginning of the goſpel, as it appears to us in the hiſtory, there is a light that riſes plainly

on

on thoſe who ſat in darkneſs and in the ſhadow of death; to teach them, though not yet diſtinctly, that their greateſt ſalvation, the kingdom of God and his ſaving power would ſoon appear. They, who before had had continually ſome miracle or ſome ſign of God's peculiar preſence and favour to them, had now for a long time, ſince the laſt of their Prophets, been deſtitute of all thoſe favours. They had no ſign, no prophet: they only had the hope of a Saviour, who was to come. But now, firſt of all, an Angel appears to Zacharias, to give him notice of the birth of John, and of Chriſt's to come immediately after his forerunner. The ſame Angel is ſent to Mary, to give her the notice which it was neceſſary ſhe ſhould have. Zacharias, Mary, and Elizabeth, are each of them inſpired perſons, and feel already the influence and power of God, which was to be more manifeſt afterwards. But nothing is ſo fit and proper to give us worthy notions of the goſpel, or to raiſe the affection that is ſuitable to it, as the appearance of angels at our Saviour's birth; when one

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of

DISC. IV. of them appearing to the ſhepherds, with a ſtrange light attending him, told them that Chriſt was born: and when others joined him and ſung together that hymn which in ſo proper a manner introduced him into the world. I cannot ſpeak of more divine things than theſe, which by the ſcripture are familiar to us and well known; and for that reaſon are eaſily neglected. But they are indeed proper things, however plain, for us to read and to conſider at this time; and ſuch another thing, that is proper to give us worthy conceptions of his divine power, who was come into the world, was the manifeſtation to ſtrangers and to Gentiles, by a ſtar, or by a light, which appeared in that manner at firſt, but afterwards, as it ſeems, in another form, and nearer to them, when it went before them, and led them to the place where Chriſt was. There is no doubt but ſo ſtrange a thing as this, when it was heard and publicly known at Jeruſalem, muſt have had the effect that was intended; to give a general notice to the Jews; and, by another effect which it had, to raiſe ſuſ-

picions

picions and fears in Herod. It is plain, that no more notices could be given; nor was any thing more intended than to raiſe an expectation at preſent, which afterwards might be remembered, and be joined with the other proofs which Chriſt himſelf would give of his divine power and goodneſs. Before him his forerunner came firſt, to prepare his way. He was "the voice of one "crying in the wilderneſs, Prepare ye the way of "the Lord, make his paths ſtraight." He pretended to no power; he worked no miracle; but preached repentance, and referred men to him who was coming; from whom only they could receive forgiveneſs and bleſſing. When the Saviour himſelf came, he appeared in the plaineſt and moſt human manner: he preached at firſt in the ſame form, that men ſhould repent, becauſe the kingdom of heaven was at hand. But with this, he ſoon began to ſhew that he himſelf would be the author of the ſalvation and bleſſings, which he preached. He healed the ſick, the lame, the blind: he ſhewed that he had a divine power that

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was

DISC. IV. was natural to him. Thoſe, who touched the hem of his garment, were made whole. He worked other miracles, not uſeleſs or glaring, but ſuch as ſhewed power; as when he bade the winds and ſtorms ceaſe. But the greateſt inſtance of his goodneſs, or of his love to men, was his dying: that by his ſufferings he might gain a right to ſave or to recover from ſin and miſery thoſe, who ſhould come unto him with truſt and due affections. From that time all power was given to him in heaven and in earth. He received his *kingdom*, but it did not come or appear among men, till the time when he ſent his ſpirit upon the Apoſtles, and when they preached by his ſpirit, and with his power preſent with them. By his power they healed, as he had done, the ſick, the lame, the blind, and raiſed the dead to life. But this was not the proper effect or nature of the goſpel itſelf; but they were reſemblances or ſignifications, as our Saviour himſelf had told them. They were the moſt natural and moſt proper proofs of a divine power that could poſſibly be given. But then it

was

was that the proper effect of the gospel itself appeared, when the Apostles themselves were so changed, as we see they were, in their real tempers and dispositions: when thousands, at their word being converted, and believing that Jesus was the true Saviour, with forgiveness of sin, were delivered at the same time from the power of it: when they were all of one heart and one mind, (had no partial or separate interest) "continuing "daily with one accord in the temple, and "breaking bread in their houses did eat their "food in gladness and singleness of heart; "praising God, and having favour with all the "people." DISC. IV.

We see plainly what the salvation of the gospel was. It was a joy in the sense of God's favour and his reconciliation to men: it was a real freedom from sin and misery. The effects or proofs of it, as the Apostle says, (Gal. 5. 22) were "love, joy, "peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, "faith, meekness, temperance." That this happiness

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pineſs and goodneſs was really by the goſpel produced in very great numbers, and more than it ever was by any other means; this is what appears plainly and is ſhewn to us in real inſtances: in the hiſtory of the Apoſtles' preaching and their epiſtles: and as this plainly is the ſalvation that is meant in the New Teſtament, ſo, I think, it is moſt probable that this is that righteouſneſs of God, that divine and trueſt goodneſs, which was revealed, or ſhewn, in real effects by the goſpel, upon believing it: ſo that every inſtance of this power was ſtill a new argument of its truth, and a freſh reaſon for believing it. If it is aſked, why this is not ſeen either ſo remarkably, or ſo really, as it was at that time; it may be ſaid, that it has theſe effects in general, that it produces great good. If we ſtill aſk, why it is not more, as we might naturally expect from ſo great a thing, ſo divine, and ſo proved, as the goſpel is; or why indeed it had not its effect more univerſally with men, than even then appears to have been; the anſwer, or a ſufficient anſwer, to this may be;

that

that we do not, perhaps, know the ſtrength of human miſery and corruption, which no power of God, no evidence nor perſuaſion, without force to their wills, which God did not intend to uſe, was able to overcome: that there is a time yet to be, in which a more general belief of the goſpel and a greater goodneſs will appear: and at preſent, if it is ſtranger that we ourſelves do not find its happineſs, nor its real effects, the reaſon, perhaps, is, that we have either never expected ſuch a ſalvation, or have never that affection that is neceſſary to receive it. For this cannot be, when we ourſelves are cold, and have no deſire nor love of ſuch goodneſs, or of him who is the author of it: and for this reaſon I have thought it ſufficient to refer you to the deſcriptions of the goſpel both in the prophets before, and in the hiſtory of it at the time itſelf; that we may know how it is repreſented; and may have a worthy opinion and ſome affection and ſenſe of the things; which is what we want: and this, I ſuppoſe, will be beſt effected by

DISC. IV. reading the things themſelves, or by conſidering what we know and have read: for the things themſelves are plainly the moſt intereſting and the moſt affecting that ever were propoſed to men: but they are now grown common, and appear indifferent to us; becauſe we remember them only, and do not ſee nor conſider them as they are in the ſcripture itſelf.

With this it is neceſſary that we ſhould at this time, as much as poſſible, forget our worldly cares and concerns whatever they are: for it is certain that theſe do not agree, nor can well conſiſt, with that diſpoſition which we ought to have, eſpecially at this time; nor does worldly joy or pleaſure, exceſs or intemperance, agree with it better. It was to deliver us from both that the goſpel was revealed; and other intereſts and other joys were ſet before us; and theſe therefore I have ſpoken of at this time, as far as I have been able; but know it would be much better that you ſhould read the things themſelves,

which

which are so great and beautiful, or remember and consider what you before have heard or read. This could not be without some good effect. DISC. IV.

DISCOURSE V.

THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST.

LUKE II, 10, 11.

Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

For unto you is born this day in the City of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

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IF ever we were concerned to rejoice, it is now; when the faireſt occaſion, and higheſt cauſe of joy, that ever was, is preſented to us. The news brought from heaven is in its nature moſt important and wonderful; in its effects moſt beneficial to us. "Unto us is born a Saviour, which is "Chriſt

" Chriſt the Lord." Or, as Iſaiah foretold in a ſublime ſtrain, " Unto us a Child is born, unto us " a Son is given, and the government ſhall be " upon his ſhoulder; and his name ſhall be called " Wonderful, Counſellor, the Mighty God, the " Everlaſting Father, the Prince of Peace: of " the increaſe of his government there ſhall be " no end." The Son of God, the Lord of Life, condeſcended (as on this day) to be born among us, and " to be made like unto us in all things, " ſin only excepted." His mother Mary, though of illuſtrious extraction, and lineally deſcended from David, was, however, an obſcure perſon, and low in the world. She, with Joſeph her huſband, went from Nazareth, the uſual place of their reſidence, to Bethlehem, the city of their tribe, to be taxed according to the Emperor's decree. " And, while they were there, the days " were accompliſhed that ſhe ſhould be delivered; " and ſhe brought forth her firſt-born ſon, and " wrapped him in ſwaddling clothes, and laid " him in a manger, becauſe there was no room

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DISC. V. "for them in the inn." The Son of God, when he emptied himſelf of his glory, and clothed himſelf with mortality, did not chooſe to appear with circumſtances of human pomp. His birth was in the humbleſt manner. It muſt, however, appear highly natural to all reaſonable and conſiderate men; and, if it confounds the pride of the great, it affords matter of comfort to the poor and lowly: for who can complain of pain, of poverty, or of hard circumſtances, after what our Lord has endured and ſuffered, and conſidering the example he has ſet us of meekneſs and patience?

Again. Let us conſider to whom the news of our Saviour's birth was firſt revealed; to whom theſe glad tidings were firſt brought—was is not to ſhepherds, "who were keeping watch over their "flock by night," in this cold wintry ſeaſon of the year?—"And lo! the Angel of the Lord came "upon them, and the glory of the Lord ſhone "round about them; and they were ſore afraid.

"But

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"But the angel ſaid unto them, fear not: for "behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, "which ſhall be to all people. For unto you is "born this day in the city of David a Saviour, "which is Chriſt the Lord." Unto theſe ſimple ſhepherds did God, whoſe thoughts are not as our thoughts, vouchſafe the firſt communications of the myſtery hid from ages and generations. Theſe plain men, whom the world would have overlooked or deſpiſed, were judged the propereſt to receive ſuch notices. Accompliſhment and addreſs, ſo ſtriking to men, are leſs pleaſing to God. An honeſt ſimplicity is more acceptable in his ſight. It indeed always makes a part of thoſe characters in the Old Teſtament, which are diſtinguiſhed with marks of his favour. It eſpecially belonged to the man after God's own heart, who was called by Samuel from feeding his father's ſheep, to be anointed King over Iſrael.

But to return to our ſhepherds, to whom the words of the text were ſpoken. Their attention

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was no ſooner rouſed by the appearance and ſpeech of the firſt Angel, than "ſuddenly there "appeared with him a multitude of the heavenly "hoſt, praiſing God, and ſaying, Glory to God "in the higheſt, and on earth peace, good-will "towards men." The Angels of heaven were not unconcerned; they appear to have rejoiced at this event. They are repreſented, as giving glory to God for this new inſtance of his mercy and loving kindneſs; as rejoicing with man, for his peace, if I may ſo ſay, juſt made with heaven; for his reconciliation to his juſtly offended Maker, through Jeſus Chriſt his Saviour, who was juſt born upon earth, and become incarnate. Can *we* then, who are more nearly concerned and intereſted upon this occaſion, refuſe our proper tribute of praiſe and thankſgiving? Can we forbear to love God, who hath ſo loved us, that he ſent his only begotten Son, as at this time, and on this day, to redeem, and to ſave us?

It may be not improper to conſider here, how far the world was prepared for this marvellous condeſcenſion on God's part. Prophane hiſtories do certainly aſſure us there prevailed about the time of our Saviour's birth a moſt univerſal expectation of ſome extraordinary, ſome divine perſon. This notion had its riſe among the Jews, and was by them ſpread over all the eaſt. Their ſcriptures, an age or two before, had been tranſlated into Greek, the moſt known language then in the world. According to Moſes's hiſtory this great event was leſs aſtoniſhing, and quite conſiſtent with what had gone before. He repreſents God as appearing to our firſt parents, and converſing with them before the fall. After the fall they had leſs room to expect ſuch a favour. However, there are grounds from the hiſtory to imagine, that he ſtill vouchſafed to ſhew himſelf to them, as it is likely he did to Abel, declaring, perhaps, by ſome viſible ſign, his approbation and acceptance of his ſacrifice. It appears that he ſpoke to Cain, with whom he DISC. V.

was

DISC. V. was diſpleaſed: that he ſpoke often to Noah: that he appeared and ſpoke to the Patriarchs; to Abraham, to Iſaac, and to Jacob:—that he led the poſterity of theſe Patriarchs, the Children of Iſrael, out of Egypt; going before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, and by night in a pillar of fire:—Moſes afterwards received the law from the mouth of the Lord—nay, the Lord appeared in the moſt ſolemn manner to the whole people of Iſrael upon Mount Sinai: "there "were thunders and lightnings and a thick "cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the "trumpet exceeding loud: and the mountain "was altogether on a ſmoke, becauſe the Lord "deſcended upon it in fire." Farther, his *Shechinah*, or viſible glory, reſided amongſt that people, till they were carried away captive into Babylon. Theſe things were all openings and preparations for that great myſtery, "God "manifeſt in the fleſh." The ſame divine perſon, this *word* of God, which was made fleſh, was the ſame, by whom the world was made,

and

and who was the God of the Iſraelites. He was the ſame, whom many prophecies had foretold; "He was the ſeed of the woman, that ſhould "bruiſe the ſerpent's head." He was deſcended from Abraham, "in whom all the families of the "earth were to be bleſſed." He was deſcended from David. The place of his birth was exactly foretold, with many remarkable circumſtances of his life and of his death. Prophecy had indeed ceaſed for ſome time after Malachi, till about the time of the coming of Chriſt. The darkneſs was thickeſt, juſt before the dawn of day; before the "ſun of righteouſneſs aroſe with healing in "his wings." John the Baptiſt was his immediate forerunner, "preaching the baptiſm of repentance "for the remiſſion of ſins." He was "the "voice of one crying in the wilderneſs, Prepare "ye the way of the Lord, make his paths "ſtraight: every valley ſhall be filled, and every "mountain brought low; and the crooked ſhall "be made ſtraight, and the rough places ſmooth; "and all fleſh ſhall ſee the ſalvation of God." DISC. V.

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DISC. V. In fulneſs of time the Son of God became incarnate. His antient people had the honour of his birth, and to them only he preached in perſon. But they were wicked and perverſe; they regarded leſs the revealed will of God, than the uncertain tradition of men. So that, when the Son of God "came unto his own, his own received him not;" when he came to his own creatures, they did not own and acknowledge their Maker: when he came to his own nation and kindred, they "de-"ſpiſed and eſteemed him not." All his life long did he, however, continue to addreſs himſelf to them with the greateſt meekneſs, with wonderful patience and perſeverance. But great prejudices were not to be overcome. Their vices and paſſions kept them blind. Our Saviour's tenderneſs and affection for them appear ſtrong in the following apoſtrophe:—"O Jeruſalem, "Jeruſalem, thou that killeſt the Prophets, and "ſtoneſt them that are ſent unto thee; how "often would I have gathered thy children toge-"ther, as an hen gathereth her chickens under

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" her wings, and ye would not!" Notwithſtanding this, even after they had put him to an ignominious death, upon his reſurrection, juſt before he aſcended into heaven, his laſt orders to his Apoſtles were to preach the goſpel, beginning with the Jews at Jeruſalem. The goſpel was accordingly firſt offered and preached to the Jews at Jeruſalem, in Judea and Samaria. Peter afterwards, not without an expreſs revelation from heaven, preached to Proſelytes of the gate. At length Paul and Barnabas were ſet apart for preaching the goſpel to the idolatrous Gentiles. Thus Chriſt was in a particular manner "the "glory of his people Iſrael;" and likewiſe, as old Simeon propheſied, "a light to lighten the "Gentiles." All nations were by degrees inſtructed in the ſaving knowledge of the goſpel. The true religion took its growth, and even made a progreſs, in ſpite of the perſecutions that were formed to obſtruct it. After it had long gained a footing in the Roman Empire, it was at length, in ſome meaſure eſtabliſhed, upon the Roman DISC. V.

DISC. V. Roman Emperors becoming Chriſtian—And, when that mighty Empire was broken in pieces by the inroads of barbarous nations, many of thoſe nations with their Chiefs embraced the Chriſtian religion. Thus "Kings became its "fathers, and Queens its nurſing mothers." The misfortune was, upon Chriſtianity's receiving this worldly eſtabliſhment, the lives and manners of its profeſſors grew corrupt. In conſequence of this, and the confuſion of continual wars, a long night of darkneſs and ignorance overſpread the world. At length from ſmall accidents (under the conduct of Divine Providence) peoples' eyes were opened. Enquiry and learning again prevailed, and religion was reformed in many countries from the corruptions under which it had long groaned. We in particular of this age and nation, as we have the happineſs to live under the beſt conſtituted government, do likewiſe profeſs the Chriſtian religion in its greateſt purity. We poſſeſs, indeed, many other advantages, together

gether with this ineſtimable one, to which none elſe can be compared. DISC. V.

Let us aſk our hearts—Are we properly thankful to the divine Author of theſe bleſſings? Do we ſing Glory to God in the higheſt? Do we deſire and cultivate peace and good-will one with another? Does our practice keep pace with our knowledge? Do we improve in religion and good manners, in proportion to our other refinements and fancied improvements? Or is the caſe otherwiſe? Are we not too careleſs about the honour of God, and welfare of our neighbour or our country, ſo long as we can ſerve our low intereſts and gratify our ſordid paſſions? Are not luxury and debauchery ſpread too much amongſt all ranks and degrees of men?

If theſe things are ſo, and thoughts of religion and virtue are really almoſt dead amongſt us; let this ſeaſon of joyful and devout feſtivity rouſe us. Gratitude and devotion muſt neceſſarily

DISC. V. ſpring up in our hearts, when we think of the Son of God becoming incarnate for our ſakes. He hath reſcued us from the bondage of ſin, and the ſlavery of Satan; he hath openly proclaimed pardon and reconciliation to the world: he hath clearly revealed eternal life to us, which was but obſcurely made known before both to Jews and Gentiles; but now is made manifeſt by the appearance of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, "who hath aboliſhed death, and brought life and "immortality to light by the goſpel:" he hath purchaſed this great bleſſing for us; and is ready to confer it upon us, if we will be contented to leave our ſins, and to be ſaved by him. He himſelf has ſet us an example, if we will walk in his ſteps. Let us aſpire then to be as like him as poſſible, in the exemplary holineſs and virtues of his life. We cannot be like him in his miracles, but we may in his mercy and compaſſion; we cannot imitate his divine power, but we may reſemble him in his humility, innocency, and his going about to do good. This

ſeaſon

ſeaſon ſhould eſpecially be celebrated in giving glory to God in the higheſt, and by all poſſible demonſtration of charity and good-will to men. All riot and exceſs ſhould likewiſe be guarded againſt, and we ſhould live ſoberly as becometh Chriſtians, who have glorious hopes, and a certain promiſe from him, who cannot deceive. We ſhould ſurely be careful not to debaſe ourſelves by ſin and ſenſuality, upon this very conſideration, that Jeſus Chriſt hath put ſuch an honour and dignity upon us: we ſhould reverence that nature which the Son of God did not diſdain to aſſume here upon earth, and in which he now glorioufly reigns in heaven. DISC. V.

DISC. V.

DISCOURSE VI.

THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

II COR. v. 20, 21.

We pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God; for he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew nò sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

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THE death of Chriſt, and his ſuffering for our ſakes, and in our ſtead, is without doubt a great and a ſurpriſing thing, if we conſider the excellence and greatneſs of him, who ſuffered for us. For it was not an angel, or one of the higheſt rank of created beings, who ſuffered and died for us; but it was the *true and proper Son*

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of God, who therefore himſelf *was God,* as the Son of Man is man; and by him, we know, that the whole world itſelf was made. For all things were made by him; (Col. 1) things that are in heaven or in earth, viſible or inviſible; all the ranks of beings, which are above us, "whether "they be thrones or dominions, principalities or "powers, all things," it is ſaid "were made *by* "him and *for* him: he is before all things, and "by him all things ſubſiſt, or are preſerved." We therefore are his work, and he died and ſuffered for his work, his creature, and in his ſtead. The reaſon of this is, as the ſcripture teaches us, becauſe he is not alone, but he has a father, to whom his work muſt be accountable as well as to himſelf: and the myſtery, the greatneſs and reaſon together of our redemption, conſiſts in this, that he, who made man, as well as other creatures, made himſelf accountable for them to his father; ſo that to ſave them, when they had ſinned, or had tranſgreſſed that rule of righteouſneſs and goodneſs, which the nature of

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DISC. VI. God requires to be obſerved, it was neceſſary, or was ſo appointed in the councils of God, that he himſelf, who made this ſinful creature, and was concerned for him, ſhould make the ſatisfaction, by ſuffering in his ſtead. "This commandment," our Saviour ſays, "he had from "his father:" and indeed it is very plain, that his ſufferings were not a thing that could be diſpenſed with or remitted; ſince, when he himſelf prayed to his Father, that, if it were poſſible, that heavy portion of ſufferings, which was laid on him, might be excuſed, we know that he was comforted and ſtrengthened, yet ſtill he ſuffered and died; which muſt be, becauſe without this the ſins of men could not be forgiven. It is true, that we may not be able to underſtand well, whether it was the juſtice or holineſs of God, that could not be reconciled to what is contrary to it; or whether it was his wiſdom, that could not approve of any other method of atonement than this; but, in either way, the conſequence is the ſame; that the ſins

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of men could not be forgiven, or God be fully reconciled to us, by any other means, than by the Son of God himſelf dying in our ſtead. DISC. VI.

Now the ſcriptures generally repreſent theſe ſufferings of Chriſt (this method and manner of our redemption) as the effect of the greateſt love and kindneſs towards men; which it is plain it is. For, if there is ſuch juſtice or holineſs in God, as could no otherwiſe be reconciled; or, if upon any other account this method and means was neceſſary; yet it muſt ſhew infinite love and kindneſs to men, both in him who ſuffered, and in him who accepted and appointed this means of our being ſaved. But the juſtice of God, his ſeverity againſt ſin, is that which appears firſt and plaineſt in this means of our redemption, which is ſo coſtly and great. This is that which I ſhall ſpeak of at preſent, and ſhall endeavour to ſhew,

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1ſt. That the death of Chriſt and his ſufferings for us is that part in our religion, which is ſo far from encouraging any to continue in ſin, that it ſhews both the juſtice of God, and the neceſſity of holineſs and goodneſs much more plainly than can be ſhewn by any other means.

And 2dly. That it teaches us better than any other means the nature, the kind and degree of that holineſs and goodneſs, which is required to make us acceptable to God; for both theſe are ſaid or implied in the words of my text: in which, after its being ſaid that God is reconciled to us, it is required that we ſhould be reconciled to him; and that he, who knew no ſin, yet was made, or ſuffered, as ſin for us, that we might become the righteouſneſs of God, might be made truly righteous and good by him.

And Firſt, That the death of Chriſt is ſo far from encouraging any to continue in ſin, that it ſhews both the juſtice of God, and the neceſſity of

of holineſs and goodneſs more plainly than they could be ſhewn by any other means. DISC. VI.

We ſhall underſtand this, if we conſider with ourſelves the greatneſs and difficulty of the method in which ſin is forgiven, and God reconciled. For that he, who was the Son of God, a divine perſon, who made man, as well as all the world, ſhould join himſelf to us ſo far as to take our nature upon him, and to be born in the real likeneſs of man, and, being in the nature of man, ſhould ſuffer reproaches and pain, and ſhame and death for us, as an atonement and ſatisfaction to God, in our ſtead, as it is ſaid continually in ſcripture; this without doubt is an expenſive and coſtly means of obtaining our pardon; and it is great and wonderful; and yet it is no more than the ſame ſcripture teaches us was neceſſary: for this is plainly ſaid, or indeed, if this is the means uſed, which is certain according to the goſpel, we may know ourſelves it it was neceſſary: for God would not chooſe ſo great

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great and ſo difficult a thing, if it were in vain, or not neceſſary. It was neceſſary therefore either by God's juſtice or wiſdom, which is the ſame neceſſity, that Chriſt ſhould die, or that this great ſatisfaction and atonement ſhould be made, before God could be reconciled, or the ſins of men forgiven. There need not be any other argument to ſhew the guilt of ſin, or how offenſive it is to God; how truly he is a God of righteouſneſs, and requires that rule, which he has given to men, both in their nature, and by his word, ſhould be obſerved, to the utmoſt of their power; how far he is from being like ourſelves, when we are wicked, or cruel, or unjuſt. And, though he bears with ſo much wickedneſs and ſin of all kinds committed in the world, yet ſtill we know by this, by his appointing and requiring ſo great a ſacrifice, that ſin is not an indifferent thing to him, but odious and contrary to him; ſince it is only by the interceſſion and ſufferings of his ſon (the Author and head of this world) that men have the forbearance which

which they find, and are ſuffered to be as they are. He is indeed our atonement, and in him, while he looks at him, God is well-pleaſed, and reconciled, ſo far as to forgive the paſt, and to call all men to righteouſneſs and goodneſs for the future. But it is plain, that ſin itſelf is moſt odious, ſince it is at ſo high a price that it is forgiven. And this is the argument which is uſed in the ſcripture; by which you may ſee more plainly what effect it was intended to have. —As, when St. Paul ſays to the Hebrews, that, "if we ſin wilfully," by which is meant a continuance in ſin, "after we have received the "knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no "more ſacrifice for ſin, but a fearful looking for "of judgment, and fiery indignation," to conſume thoſe, who ſtand out againſt the goſpel; for, "if he, who deſpiſed Moſes's law, died "without mercy, of how much ſorer puniſhment "ſhall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden "under foot the Son of God, and hath counted "the blood of the covenant, by which he was "ſanctified,

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"ſanctified, an unholy thing;" that is, a common or a ſmall thing?—In the ſame manner St. Peter argues (1 Peter 1) "If ye call on the "Father, who, without reſpect of perſons, judgeth "according to every man's work, paſs the time "of your ſojourning here in fear; ſince ye know "that ye were not redeemed with corruptible "things, as ſilver and gold, from your vain con-"verſation, received from your fathers; but by "the precious blood of Chriſt;" as it muſt needs be, if we conſider his divine nature, as well as his perfect innocence and goodneſs. And this is juſtly made an argument that we ſhould not continue in ſin, but paſs the time of our living in this world in fear: in fear of God's juſtice and puniſhment of ſin; conſidering how dearly, or at how high a price, our redemption, or our forgiveneſs of paſt ſins, is obtained. There is nothing that can be thought of more plain to teach us the difference between good and ill, and that there is a God who judges the world, and who will not ſuffer ſin to be unpuniſhed; there

there is nothing that could teach this ſo clearly, as his having appointed and ſent into the world his own Son, and his requiring that he ſhould make an atonement and ſatisfaction for us. And we ought always to remember and conſider this, to have it continually before our eyes; that the flatteries of this world may not tempt us to think that all is innocent that pleaſes ourſelves; or the permiſſion of ſo much ſin tempt us to think that God is not diſpleaſed with what he ſuffers. It is for the ſake of his ſon, and by his interceſſion only, that the world, ſuch as this is, is endured in his ſight—"In him he is well-pleaſed;" with his perfect goodneſs and righteouſneſs he is ſatisfied: his ſufferings in our ſtead have appeaſed him, and reconciled him to us; ſo far that we are allowed in this world a time of repentance and of grace; ſince "God is willing that all "ſhould be ſaved, and come to the acknowledg-"ment of the truth;" *i. e.* of the true righteouſneſs and goodneſs which he requires. DISC. VI.

For

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For 2dly. This is another thing which we are taught by this method of our ſalvation. It teaches us not only the neceſſity of holineſs and goodneſs, but the true nature and degree of goodneſs that is required of us. And for this purpoſe we muſt obſerve, that the atonement and the ſatisfaction of Chriſt is plainly ſaid to be neceſſary for all: for it is ſaid, that neither the wiſeſt and beſt of the Gentiles or Jews are juſtified, or thought worthy of God's favour and mercy, by their own righteouſneſs or goodneſs; by their own works or deſervings; and our Saviour hath taught us expreſsly, that we muſt be born again, or begotten anew, by the power of his ſpirit, before we can be capable, or worthy, of the kingdom of God: and from the death of Chriſt it is urged plainly and frequently, that we muſt die not only to our open ſins, but to our old nature and diſpoſitions, from which they ſpring. And it is this plainly the Apoſtle St. Paul has in view in ſeveral places, where he ſpeaks of the excellence of the knowledge of

Jeſus

Jeſus Chriſt. He does not mean only the bleſſing and mercy that comes by him; but he means this, that his doctrine, the doctrine of Chriſt, and of Chriſt, as crucified, and dying for us, teaches righteouſneſs and goodneſs more than we could underſtand in any other way, or by any other means. And, therefore, he ſays, "How "can we, who are dead to ſin, live any longer "therein?" "Know ye not, that ſo many of "us, as were baptized unto Jeſus Chriſt were "baptized unto his death?—We were buried "with Chriſt unto death, that, as he roſe again "by the power and ſpirit of God, ſo muſt we to "a new life." And the truth, *i. e.* the true doctrine of righteouſneſs, according to Chriſt, he ſays to the Epheſians, is this, that we put off our old, or firſt, nature, and put on the new, which after God is created to a better righteouſneſs and goodneſs. So that we ſee plainly how deep the inſtruction of the goſpel is; and how far it is expected to go, and to take effect, in our hearts and minds. "For they that are "Chriſt's,"

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DISC. VII. "Christ's," it is said, must "have crucified their "sinful nature with its affections and lusts." And indeed we cannot otherwise judge from the thing itself: for, if Christ died for us, and in our stead, it is plainly, because what we have of our own is worthy to die and be destroyed: and it is not to be supposed, that, after his death for us, and in our stead, we can be at liberty to live in pleasure or indulgence, or in the gratification of any thing that is ourselves properly; but, being redeemed from our former sins, it is plain we ought to live with greater purity; or to live only, as it is said to him, to his honour, and according to his desire, who died and gave himself for us. This is the instruction and the use that we ought to make of this subject of our Saviour's death and sufferings. For this reason we ought to remember them, as the best instruction, and most excellent persuasive to all holiness and goodness.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE VII.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

1 COR. XV. 14.

If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith also is vain.

DISC. VII.

THE great foundation of our hope of immortality is the revelation of the gospel; and the great evidence of the truth of that revelation is the resurrection of Christ. As then the truth of that revelation is of the greatest importance to men's souls in the whole; so the proof of the resurrection of Christ is of the greatest importance towards securing the certainty of that revelation in particular. By the light of nature,

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indeed, the being and attributes of God were certain and demonſtrable; the probability of a future ſtate was great and undeniable; the expectation of God's dealing mercifully with penitent ſinners was reaſonable and hopeful. But by the revelation of the goſpel only was this great hope ſecured to us; the pardon of ſin declared by the authority of God; life and immortality brought to light by teſtimony, as well as by rational arguments; the rewards and puniſhments of eternity diſtinctly ſet forth; and the particular method of the final judgment affectionately repreſented to us.

In like manner, as to the evidence of the truth of this revelation, by the prophecies of the Old Teſtament it was long before predicted; by the reaſonableneſs of the doctrine itſelf it was made very credible; by the witneſs of our Lord and his Apoſtles it was ſtrongly atteſted; by the conviction and ſilencing of its adverſaries it was confirmed and eſtabliſhed; by many ſigns and

wonders

wonders and mighty works, done by Chriſt in his life, it was for the preſent proved beyond contradiction: but by the laſt evidence only, by the reſurrection of our Lord from the dead, was it for ever aſcertained to all generations. For, had this laſt proof failed, all the reſt muſt in courſe have fallen with it. The prophecies would have appeared wonderful, but never fulfilled; the doctrine would have continued reaſonable, but its author periſhed; the miracles of his life would have remained aſtoniſhing, but ſtill confuted by his death; his enemies would have continued to inſult him, as did the Jews; "he "ſaved others, himſelf he cannot ſave:" and his friends, that loved his doctrine, and hoped for the ſalvation of God, could but have joined with his deſponding diſciples; "We truſted it had "been he which ſhould have redeemed Iſrael." In a word, as St. Paul expreſſes it in the text, "Had not Chriſt riſen again, then had our whole "preaching been vain, and your faith alſo in "vain." DISC. VII.

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The reſurrection of Chriſt, then, being a fact of ſo great importance, on which the evidence of the truth of the whole revelation finally depended, it was neceſſary, in the wiſdom of providence, that the proof of this great fact ſhould be made unanſwerably ſtrong.

In the following diſcourſe, therefore, I ſhall, 1ſt, endeavour to ſet before you, briefly, and in one view, the particulars of that great and ſingular caſe, which was taken to make the proof of the fact undeniable, that our Saviour did really riſe from the dead. 2dly, I ſhall conſider what were the effects of his reſurrection with reſpect to *Chriſt himſelf*. And 3dly, what were the effects of it with regard to *us*.

1ſt. As to the care of providence, to make the proof of the fact itſelf undeniable, that our Saviour *did* really riſe from the dead; now there was notice given of this by the prophecies of the Old Teſtament long before: more eſpecially by this

this remarkable one—"Thou wilt not leave my "ſoul in hell, neither wilt thou ſuffer thy holy "one to ſee corruption." This the Apoſtles themſelves, in the Book of Acts, applied to our Saviour, and ſhewed not to be applicable to David, or to any other perſon. There were likewiſe plain notices given, by our Lord himſelf, to his diſciples, before his ſuffering, that they ſhould expect his riſing from the dead. And, becauſe this was a thing of the greateſt importance, he repeatedly inculcated it upon them. Firſt, before his transfiguration, (Matt. 16. 21) "From that time forth began Jeſus to ſhew "unto his diſciples, how that he muſt ſuffer "many things, and be killed, and *be raised* "*again the third day.*" Then again, after his tranſiguration, (chap. 17. 9) as they came down from the mountain, "Jeſus charged them to "tell no man the viſion, till the Son of Man be "riſen from the dead." Again, at his laſt going up to Jeruſalem, (chap. 20. 17) he took the twelve diſciples apart in the way, and ſaid unto them—

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them—"The Son of Man ſhall be betrayed to "the chief prieſts; and they ſhall condemn him "to death, *and the third day he ſhall riſe again.*" Beſides which plain admonitions to his diſciples, he gave ſome obſcure hints of it to the whole people alſo; when, upon the Jews requiring of him a ſign, at one time he ſaid unto them, (John 2. 19) "Deſtroy this temple, and in three days "I will raiſe it up:" and, at another time, (Matt. 12. 39) "To an evil and adulterous "generation there ſhall no ſign be given, but "the ſign of the Prophet Jonas; for, as Jonas "was three days and three nights in the whale's "belly, ſo ſhall the Son of Man be three days "and three nights in the heart of the earth." The deſign and uſe of which predictions, though not at all underſtood at the time they were ſpoken, is declared to us by the Evangeliſt: (John 2. 22.) "When therefore he was riſen from the dead, his "diſciples remembered that he had ſaid this unto "them; and they believed the ſcriptures and "the words that Jeſus had ſaid."

Farther,

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Farther, in order to make the proof of his reſurrection ſtill more evident, the place, and manner, and circumſtances of his burial, were particularly remarkable. (Mark 15. 42) Joſeph of Arimathea, an honourable counſellor, begged his body, and wrapped it in fine linen, and laid it in his own ſepulchre; and this in the preſence of ſeveral of Jeſus's followers; who thereupon, reſolving to come to embalm him, were providentially directed to become witneſſes of many circumſtances of his reſurrection. Beſides, the method which his adverſaries themſelves took, to find evidence (as they thought) of the impoſture; "making the ſepulchre ſure, ſealing the ſtone, "and ſetting a watch," (Matt. 27. 66) was by providence deſigned, on the contrary, to become a ſtrong proof of the truth of his reſurrection; taking away all pretence or poſſibility of that plauſible objection, that his diſciples came by night and ſtole him away.

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These are the principal instances of the care that was taken in the circumstances going before our Lord's resurrection to render the proof of the fact certain and undeniable. After his rising again, the accumulative evidence of the truth of his being risen is much greater, not only than what unbelievers, but even than believers themselves, without putting together the numerous circumstances recorded in different places of scripture, can easily imagine. In the 1st place an earthquake terrified the watch, and the appearance of an angel made them become as dead men. (Matt. 28. 2) Then 2dly the persons, who came with a design to embalm the body, saw likewise an angel, and were told by him that their Lord was risen from the dead. (ver. 6) Immediately after this, Jesus himself appeared to them and comforted them. (ver. 9) 3dly, he appeared to two of his Disciples going to Emmaus, (Luke 24. 13) and "talked with them, and "expounded unto them in all the scriptures the "things concerning himself." Then again, 4thly,

4thly, he ſhewed himſelf to Peter alone, (ver. 34) and (1 Cor. 15. 5) Then 5thly to St. James. (ver. 7) After that, 6thly, to ſeven of the Apoſtles together. (John 21. 2) Then 7thly, to ten of them, Thomas only being abſent. (John 20. 19) And 8thly, a week after, to all the eleven, (ver. 26) Thomas being preſent with them; whoſe doubting faith he vouchſafed to confirm, by ſuffering him to handle him. Laſtly, after theſe ſeveral more private appearances of our Lord to his Apoſtles, he was ſeen (ſaith St. Paul) "of "above five hundred brethren at once; of whom "though ſome were fallen aſleep, yet the "greater part of them remained alive unto that "preſent time," when St. Paul wrote this Epiſtle to the Corinthians. And in this manner continued he "for forty days together, ſhewing him-"ſelf alive after his paſſion, by many infallible "proofs, and ſpeaking of the things pertaining "to the kingdom of God." (Acts 1. 3) After which, at mid-day, in the preſence of all the Apoſtles, he was taken up from them viſibly into heaven

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heaven. (ver. 9) And they were told by angels, (ver. 11) what he alſo himſelf had before told them, in his life-time, "that, in like manner, as they "ſaw him go into heaven, ſo from thence likewiſe ſhould they ſee him come, at the end of "the world, with power and great glory; even "in the glory of his father, and all his holy "angels with him, to judge the quick and dead," with a righteous and unerring ſentence; rendering to every man impartially, according to his works. Put all the evidence now together, and let it be fairly conſidered in one view: evidence, given by ſo many different perſons, repeated at ſo many different times, diverſified with ſuch variety of circumſtances, yet all agreeing in ſuch a perfect uniformity as to the thing itſelf. And was there ever more undeniable proof given of any matter of fact in the world? Nevertheleſs, after all this, he appeared again to St. Stephen, and again to St. Paul, as he himſelf teſtifies. "Laſt of all" (ſays he, 1 Cor. 15. 8.) "he was "ſeen of me alſo, as of one born out of due "time."

"time." Beſides all which cloud of eye-witneſſes, the truth of our Lord's reſurrection continued moreover to be proved by the miracles which the Apoſtles worked in his name, *i. e.* through his power and authority: alſo by the prophecies he himſelf delivered, both before and after his ſuffering; the gradual fulfilling of which prophecies in all ſucceeding times has been, and is, a ſtanding proof of our Lord being truly riſen, and that he is inveſted with all power, to accompliſh whatever he has foretold. He clearly predicted, in the fulleſt and moſt diſtinct manner, the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, and the deſolation of the whole Jewiſh nation: which nation ſhould yet, nevertheleſs, continue in being, (as we ſee in fact it does at this day) "till the times "of the Gentiles be fulfilled." (Luke 21. 24.) He foretold, that his diſciples ſhould be hated both by Jews and Gentiles, and perſecuted from one city to another. That nevertheleſs that doctrine ſhould ſpread over the whole earth, and, by the mere force of truth and reaſon, of goodneſs DISC. VII.

and

DISC. VIII. and charity, ſhould prevail over all the violence, and be eſtabliſhed againſt all the oppoſition of human authority. That, after having ſo prevailed over all outward enemies, it ſhould, by an unaccountable corruption within itſelf, be over-run with almoſt a total apoſtaſy; the power and authority of men taking upon themſelves to ſit in the ſeat of God; and compelling all men, by force and violence, to ſubmit to doctrines of their own invention; and turning Chriſt's religion of peace and love, of meekneſs and charity, into a worldly religion of dominion and power, of contention, hatred, and oppreſſion. All which predictions, having been already exactly and particularly fulfilled in the plaineſt and moſt remarkable manner, give abundant reaſon to expect, that what ſtill remains ſhall likewiſe in its time be no leſs punctually accompliſhed.

I proceed now, in the 2d place, to conſider what were the effects of Chriſt's reſurrection, with regard to our Lord himſelf. And they were,

1ſt,

1ſt, that thereby he was effectually, and in a moſt convincing manner, declared to be the Son of God; "declared to be the Son of God with "power," ſaith St. Paul, "by the reſurrection "from the dead." (Rom. 1. 4) Inſomuch that even thoſe words of the Pſalmiſt, "Thou art "my Son, this day have I begotten thee," are by the ſame Apoſtle, in his ſermon to the people of Antioch, applied to this very purpoſe. (Acts 13. 32.) "The promiſe which was made unto "the fathers God has fulfilled (ſays he) unto "us, their children, in that he has raiſed up "Jeſus again; as it is alſo written in the 2d "Pſalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I "begotten thee." Not that Chriſt then began to *be* the Son of God, but that he was then *declared* to be ſo, by a moſt powerful and effectual proof; "having looſed the pains of death, "and ſhewn that it was not poſſible that he "ſhould be holden of it." 2dly. Another effect of Chriſt's reſurrection, with regard to our Lord himſelf, was his being thereby declared the judge DISC. VII.

of

DISC. VII. of quick and dead. (Acts 10. 40, 42) "Him "God raiſed up the third day, and commanded "us to teſtify, that it is he, which was ordained "of God to be the judge of quick and dead." And (chap. 17. 31) "God hath appointed a day, "in which he will judge the world in righteouſ- "neſs, by that man whom he hath ordained; "whereof he hath given aſſurance unto all "men, in that he has raiſed him from the "dead."

It remains that I proceed, in the 3d and laſt place, to conſider what are the effects of our Lord's reſurrection, with reſpect to us. And they are; 1ſt, our juſtification. That is to ſay; the reſurrection of Chriſt from the dead was, on God's part, a public and authentic declaration of his accepting the ſacrifice of the death of Chriſt, as an atonement for the ſins of all that truly repent. This is the meaning of thoſe paſſages of St. Paul, where he tells us, that "Chriſt "was delivered for our offences, and raiſed again

"for

"for our juſtification: (Rom. 4. 25) "that "we," *i. e.* wicked men, both among Jews and Gentiles, "having been dead in ſin," *i. e.* having been in a ſtate of condemnation; "God, who "raiſed Chriſt from the dead, hath quickened "us together with him;" (has reſtored us to the hope of eternal life) "having forgiven us all "treſpaſſes: (Col. 2. 13) and that, if Chriſt be "not raiſed, we are yet in our ſins;" (1 Cor. 15. 17.) *i. e.* if Chriſt be not riſen, we have then no evidence of God's having accepted Chriſt's mediation for us; nor, conſequently, of our being juſtified, or having our repentance accepted; to ſuch degrees and purpoſes, at leaſt, as God has now declared that it ſhall be accepted through faith in him.

2dly. The ſecond effect of the reſurrection of Chriſt, with regard to us, is our ſanctification or regeneration: *i. e.* our riſing from the death of ſin unto a life of righteouſneſs. (Rom. 6. 4) "We are buried with him by baptiſm into "death;

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"death; that, like as Chriſt was raiſed up from "the dead by the glory of the Father, even ſo "we alſo ſhould walk in newneſs of life; that, "having been planted together, in the likeneſs "of his death, we ſhould be alſo in the likeneſs "of his reſurrection." The meaning of the Apoſtle is, that the death and reſurrection of Chriſt, into which we are baptized, and whereof baptiſm is an emblem, ought to be a perpetual obligation upon us, to riſe from the death of ſin unto the ſpiritual life of righteouſneſs and holineſs; (Col. 2. 12. and 3. 1.) buried with him in baptiſm, wherein alſo ye are riſen with him. "If "ye, then, (ſaith he) be riſen with Chriſt, ſeek "thoſe things which are above; for ye are dead "to ſin," *i. e.* dead (as the ſame Apoſtle explains it, Rom. 6. 2.) "and your life is hid with "Chriſt in God." And what he means by that phraſe, *hid with Chriſt in God*, is explained in the next verſe: (chap. 3. 3.) "When Chriſt, "who is our life, ſhall appear, then ſhall ye alſo "appear with him in glory."

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The third and laſt effect of the reſurrection of Chriſt, with reſpect to us, is the aſſurance of *our* reſurrection likewiſe, unto glorification. (1 Cor. 15. 20.) "Now is Chriſt riſen "from the dead, and become the firſt fruits of "them that ſlept." And therefore this is conſtantly uſed by the Apoſtles, as a perpetual argument of conſolation to good Chriſtians. (1 Pet. 1. 3.) "Bleſſed be the God and Father "of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who, according to "his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again "unto a lively hope, by the reſurrection of "Jeſus Chriſt from the dead." (Rom. 8. 11.) "If the ſpirit of him, that raiſed up Jeſus from "the dead, dwell in you; he, that raiſed up "Chriſt from the dead, ſhall alſo quicken your "mortal bodies, by his ſpirit, that dwelleth in "you." And (1 Theſſ. 4. 14.) If we believe, "that Jeſus died, and roſe again, even ſo them "alſo, which ſleep in Jeſus, will God bring "with him."

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DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE VIII.

THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST.

ACTS I. 9.

And, when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight.

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IT is a ſatisfaction to ſee that this great thing was done ſo plainly, and was really ſet before the eyes of the diſciples. When our Saviour had ſpoken to them what was moſt proper, in their ſight he was taken up: we may well ſuppoſe they ſaw this with joy and wonder. Their eyes followed him till a cloud of glory, a bright cloud, ſuch as was at his transfiguration,

DISC. VIII. which came over his diſciples, (and they feared, it is ſaid, when they went into the cloud, becauſe they knew it was the mark of a divine preſence which made it tolerable to them) 'till ſuch a cloud, a cloud of glory, received him out of their ſight. And, while they looked up earneſtly to ſee this, "Behold two men," two angels, "ſtood by them in white apparel; who ſaid, Ye "men of Galilee, why ſtand ye gazing up into "heaven?" Our Saviour himſelf had told them what they were to do; that they were to go back to Jeruſalem, and to wait there for the promiſe of the Father; the power which they were to receive, by which they ſhould be enabled to preach the goſpel to the world. The angels told them what would be hereafter, that they might not think he was gone for ever, and never again to be ſeen to this world. The angels ſaid, Why ſtand ye looking up ſo earneſtly, and following him with your eyes, as if you were never to ſee him more? "This ſame Jeſus, who is taken up "from you into heaven, ſhall ſo come, in like "manner,

"manner, as ye have ſeen him go into heaven." In this account we have no more than was viſible: that he went up from them with a mark of a divine perſon, or of the proper Son of God. In the account which we have by St. Mark it is, "After the Lord had ſpoken unto them, he *was* "*received*, was taken up into heaven;" and then is added to what glory he was taken up, which we know from all the ſcripture which is in our creed: he was taken up, or aſcended, into heaven, and ſet at the right hand of God. DISC. VIII.

The uſe of this great and divine thing, for which reaſon it was ſo plainly related and ſet before our eyes, is that which our Church has expreſſed in the prayer for Aſcenſion Day; "that, "as we believe" God the only begotten Son, and "our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, to have aſcended into "heaven, ſo we may alſo in heart and mind "thither aſcend, and with him continually "dwell:" that we may have our thoughts in heaven, where our treaſure is; that, as St. Paul

DISC. VIII. ſays, "We may" ſeek and "ſet our affections "on things above, where Chriſt ſitteth at the "right hand of God, and not on things on the "earth." How uſeful this great thing is for this purpoſe, which is therefore ſo plain and ſet before our eyes, we ſee by the effect it had, and was intended to have, on the Apoſtles. Though our Saviour had ſpoken ſo much of the nature of his kingdom, that it conſiſted now on earth of ſpiritual, and the moſt real, bleſſings; that it was to be accompliſhed hereafter in heaven; yet they were not ſatisfied now, but that he was firſt to reign upon earth, and to give them peace and proſperity firſt here upon earth: ſo that, when they met together at the place where he had appointed them, they aſked him, "Lord, wilt "thou, at this time, reſtore the kingdom to "Iſrael?" They thought he would now deliver Iſrael, his people, from the ſubjection they were in to worldly powers. Our Saviour, who in his life-time had borne ſo long with their prejudices, did not even now tell them plainly that this was not his

his deſign of coming into the world, that this was not what they were to ſet their minds upon; but only tells them it was "not for them to "know the times, or the ſeaſons, which God "had put in his own power; that they ſhould "receive power by the Holy Ghoſt coming "upon them; and then they ſhould be his "witneſſes in Jeruſalem, in Judea, and in "Samaria, and unto the end of the earth. And, "when he had ſpoken theſe things, in their "ſight, he was taken from them, and a cloud "*of glory* received him out of their ſight." This was the moſt effectual means to anſwer their queſtion, whether he had any deſign to reign here upon earth or to give any temporal or worldly felicity. It was the beſt and moſt effectual means to take their affections from things on earth, and to raiſe them to that place to which he was gone. And they, therefore, being prepared by all the goodneſs of his doctrine, and by his ſpirit, already in their hearts, when they ſaw that he was gone into heaven,

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where he had before told them he was to go, that he would prepare a place for them, that from thence he would send them blessings, and they were told now, that he should come again towards the earth, as visibly as he now went from it; they lost all their worldly thoughts, and "returned to Jerusalem," it is said, "with great "joy."

That this great thing, the Ascension of Christ, may have some of the same effects upon us, let us consider what reasons the Apostles had for joy, when they saw him go from them, and leave them, which they did not desire, but now rejoiced to see him ascend into heaven.

1st. They rejoiced first upon *his* account, whom they loved; to see him raised above this world, and taken from them to greater glory. They did not know, at first, to what glory he was raised, or to what power; they did not know these things clearly; they were opened to them by

by degrees. But they ſaw him who had ſuffered and died, and was crucified, and whom they had ſeen ſo often after he was riſen; they ſaw him now taken up into heaven (to happineſs and to glory they knew) and therefore in his happineſs and in his glory they rejoiced. It was natural for them to rejoice, as they loved him, and he ſo infinitely deſerved their love. It was natural they ſhould rejoice, to ſee him raiſed to happineſs and glory above this world, though they were left behind, and deſtitute of his perſonal preſence and converſation. I ſay ſo much, that we may ſee the reaſon for this love; when we ſee it now in the Apoſtles, when they themſelves were beginners, and were not yet fully inſtructed to know what he had done for them. But they ſaw reaſons to rejoice, that he, who had ſuffered ſhame, and pain, and death, on their account, who was an innocent and ſpotleſs perſon, whoſe words and converſation had been ſweet and delightful to them, they rejoiced that he was now raiſed to glory and taken up to heaven before their eyes. DISC. VIII.

2dly.

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2dly. Besides this, they knew (though indeed they knew nothing perfectly) yet they might remember from what he had said, that "he was "to go before them, to prepare a place for "them;" and that they were to come to the same place where he was. They knew, and we know most truly, from what they have told us, that he came into the world, to be a Saviour and leader to happiness; not one who did or suffered any thing for himself. If he ascended into heaven, they knew it was what they should be raised to in due time. He will not be there without those for whose sake he came into the world. He did not leave heaven, to come into this world, but because he intended to lead us from this world to heaven. It is a sure proof that heaven is open to us, because *he* is there.

3dly. They knew now, and would know more hereafter, that he was taken to sit at the right hand of God, in an equal possession of God's power

power and glory; and that, as they are one, as he ſays, having the moſt perfect union in their deſigns and counſels, ſo all power is given to him in heaven and in earth. This was the kingdom to which he was raiſed; a power to judge and to order all the affairs and concerns of men here upon earth; eſpecially thoſe, which concern their future ſalvation and the happineſs to which they are called. DISC. VIII.

They knew, becauſe he had told them ſo, that he would ſend bleſſings upon them, not only gifts and extraordinary powers, to enable them to preach the Goſpel, and to propagate it to all the world; but the greateſt bleſſings, comfort, peace and joy, and all the goodneſs that we know muſt be from his ſpirit. He is in heaven, ready to hear our prayers; he will hear our prayers himſelf and grant what we pray for, or he will intercede with his Father, and whatever we aſk in his name, his Father will do it. We may pray to him himſelf, or to his

Father

Diſc. VIII. Father in his name; we want no other interceſſors: we have a friend in heaven, who, we are ſure, will not neglect our prayers. They ſhall not fail, if they are for ſuch things as pleaſe him, and for ſuch things as are proper for us to aſk.

This is the great comfort that we derive from his Aſcenſion into heaven. We have now an advocate and interceſſor there: one, who has called himſelf our friend, and who has given greater and ſtronger proofs than any other ever gave. He came from heaven, from the glory, which he ever had with the Father. He came into this world to ſuffer, becauſe it was neceſſary for us. He was a ſuffering perſon all his life: he ſuffers ſtill, while we reproach and crucify him afreſh, or when we will not permit all that he did and ſuffered for us to do us any good. He is united to us by taking our nature upon him: he is God and man together: he muſt, therefore, be touched with a

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ſenſe of our infirmities. We have the greateſt encouragement that is poſſible to pray to him: we cannot doubt but he will hear us in every thing that it is proper for us to aſk or to deſire.

We ſhould, therefore, pray for God's ſpirit and his grace, to preſerve us from ſin, and to lead us on to true righteouſneſs and goodneſs. God will give theſe beſt things to thoſe that aſk him. We have the greateſt encouragement to think ſo from this conſideration, that Chriſt is in heaven, to grant our prayers, or to intercede for us.

This is the great point, as St. Paul ſays, that God, the proper Son of God, he, who has all the fulneſs of the Godhead, "was manifeſted in the "fleſh;" appeared in our nature, and was united to our nature. He is man, as well as God, and we are required to believe this. That he, whom we call upon, was man, is evident: for he was born, he lived an human life, with all human infirmities:

Diſc. VIII. infirmities at laſt he died. That he was a divine perſon, we have proved to us by all the proofs that were poſſible to be given: by all his works, by what he ſays himſelf, and by what is ſaid of him by an extraordinary voice from heaven. That he ſhould die, that he ſhould ſuffer ſo much, is extraordinary. It was natural to him, that he ſhould riſe again. That he ſhould aſcend into heaven was natural, and what was to be expected. But it was proper to be ſhewn, to be ſhewn to their eyes; to the eyes of thoſe who were to be his witneſſes. He went up, therefore, in the ſight of his diſciples. All theſe things are the cleareſt, the plaineſt, and certainly the greateſt, that ever were related. We have now a friend in heaven: one that came from heaven itſelf to viſit us; that lived as we do; that was even inferior to moſt men on our account. Let us not be offended with his humility and extreme condeſcenſion. Let us alſo conſider his divine greatneſs. He is aſcended into heaven, which is his natural place, where he was before. There

cannot

cannot be any thing greater in the world than this. We ought to rejoice in his glory; we ought to truſt in him; we ought to love him; we ought to place our affections upon him; for that is to place them in heaven, as St. Paul ſays, "where Chriſt ſitteth at the right hand of God." He will come from heaven again, to ſave us, to raiſe us from the dead. We may be certain of this, that we ſhall be taken up (we ſhall aſcend) to meet him in the clouds, when he is coming towards the earth. Whether he is at any time to reign here with his happy people, happy in all ſpiritual and heavenly bleſſings, and then afterwards to take them up with him into heaven, we do not know. It is not neceſſary we ſhould. But this we may know, that where he is, if we ſerve him faithfully, we ſhall be with him. This is enough: he is divine; he is full of grace and goodneſs; he has all power that can be conceived in heaven or in earth. Wherever *he* is, it is *heaven*. This we ought to underſtand, and to be ſatisfied with it. DISC. VIII.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE IX.

THE GIFT OF TONGUES.

ACTS II. 16, 17.

This is that, which was spoken by the Prophet Joel;

And it shall come to pass, in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.

DISC. IX. THIS prediction of the prophet Joel is very remarkable, and began to be fulfilled upon the day of Pentecoft, in fuch a manner, and with fuch

ſuch circumſtances, as to call for our moſt ſerious attention and meditation. The death of Chriſt was a moſt terrible ſhock to his diſciples. They immediately diſperſed upon it, and could ſcarcely recover themſelves even after his reſurrection and viſible aſcenſion into heaven. The loſs of his perſonal inſtruction and familiar teaching they were very ſenſible of, and had little idea of the comforter he promiſed to ſend them, who was farther to inſtruct them, and to guide them into all truth. If we ſee the event we this day commemorate in its true point of view, we muſt attend very exactly to the circumſtances of Chriſt's firſt diſciples. DISC. IX.

We muſt ſuppoſe twelve illiterate fiſhermen and others, in all a company of men and women of about one hundred and twenty; who, from the opinion they had of Jeſus of Nazareth, as the great Prophet, and temporal king of the Jews, became his diſciples from a well-diſpoſed temper of mind; but who had yet ſcarcely learned any

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thing from him, concerning the true deſign of his coming into the world, by reaſon of the ſtrong prejudices and preconceptions they laboured under; and alſo withal expected, that he would reſtore the kingdom to Iſrael, not only before his death, but after his reſurrection; though willing to wait his time for it. We muſt then conſider them in the condition they were, when they ſaw their great Lord and maſter leave them, and were told by angels, that he was not to return to them any more. And what inclination can we imagine muſt they have had to go, and witneſs his reſurrection, or his being taken up in their ſight, to the Jews? All that we can expect from them is to find them, as we do, (Acts 1. 13.) aſſemble together in that upper room where they uſed to meet, with the door ſhut, for fear of the Jews, to converſe with one another. But can we expect, that they ſhould go and teſtify this to their countrymen, in hopes to perſuade them of the truth of it? Thoſe who were ſo far from believing on him in his life time,

time, as to have put him to death; who had hired men to ſay, that, when the guards ſlept about his ſepulchre, his diſciples had ſtolen him away, and were fully determined to purſue them as cheats and deceivers? This was what our Saviour himſelf did not expect from them. All that he required was, that they ſhould become his witneſſes, after they had received power by the Holy Ghoſt's coming upon them; (Acts 1. 8.) or, as he expreſſes it, in another place, "after "they had received a mouth and wiſdom from "him, which their adverſaries ſhould not be "able to gainſay or reſiſt." (Luke 21. 15.) DISC. IX.

They ſeem, therefore, to have kept ſtill together in the upper room, till they heard "the "ſound from heaven, as of a mighty, ruſhing "wind, filling all the houſe," and immediately find that the Holy Ghoſt falls upon them. Whereupon Peter ſtands up with the eleven, and lifts up his voice (ſpeaking with courage and energy) and ſays unto the whole multitude that

DISC. IX. was come together, "Ye men of Judea, and all "ye that dwell at Jeruſalem, be this known unto "you, and hearken unto my words."—"And "then alſo with many other words did he teſtify "to them" the miracles Chriſt wrought in his life-time, his reſurrection, his aſcenſion, and ſending down, and their receiving the Holy Ghoſt. You ſee an immediate effect of the gift of the Holy Ghoſt. Without it, little ſucceſs could have been expected from his cleareſt and fulleſt teſtimony to the truth of facts. The multitude had heard our Saviour, ſeen his miracles, felt the benefit of his cures; and yet, "who believed his "report, and to whom was the arm of the Lord "revealed?" The Jews, to whom they were to teſtify theſe facts, were highly prejudiced againſt the witneſſes and their teſtimony. The witneſſes were illiterate men, all of them of Galilee, (Acts 2. 7.) and the chiefeſt of them fiſhermen there. The manifeſt tendency of that teſtimony was, that the goſpel of Chriſt was to do that, which the law could not do, in that it was weak. The

Jews

Jews knew that God ſpake by Moſes: they were bigotted to his law to the higheſt degree. As it came from God, it had long continued among them, and was ſuited to their low and carnal apprehenſion of things. They were likewiſe impatiently deſirous of being releaſed from the Roman yoke by a temporal deliverer; and fond of the interpretations and traditions of the elders, which were agreeable to their immoral and ſuperſtitious diſpoſitions. The Gentile world had been long ſettled in idolatry and polytheiſm: which not only allowed but ſanctified thoſe luſts, to which human nature is moſt addicted; gluttony, drunkenneſs, and all kinds of impurity. To make ſuch men as theſe hearken and attend, there muſt be ſomething new and uncommon to ſtrike them. Nothing could do that like ignorant and illiterate men ſpeaking, to people of fifteen or ſixteen different countries, their own languages in perfection. And, beſides, when they went to the idolatrous Gentiles, they muſt ſpeak in their DISC. IX.

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reſpective tongues, or they ſhould not be underſtood.

But when they ſpoke and were attended to, they were not only to teſtify to Jews and Gentiles the great facts of Chriſtianity, that Jeſus of Nazareth, who was dead, was riſen again, and aſcended; he having appeared to them often, and converſed with them after his reſurrection; and they having ſeen him aſcend gradually, ſo as that they could not be miſtaken, 'till a cloud of glory took him out of their ſight; and having alſo received theſe gifts from him after his aſcenſion. But they were to prove that their teſtimony concerning theſe facts was true. And what could prove this ſo fully, as theſe gifts of the Holy Ghoſt?

But if they had by theſe gifts convinced the Jews and Gentiles of the truth of theſe facts, they had then indeed perſuaded them to be Chriſtians. But that muſt have been the utmoſt they

they could have done, if they had not received the word of wiſdom, as well as the other gifts of the Holy Ghoſt; and thereby have been able not only to have witneſſed to theſe facts of Chriſtianity, but to have taught the whole Chriſtian ſcheme in its full extent and latitude; ſhewing that Jeſus of Nazareth was raiſed up to ſit on David's throne, by being made Lord and Chriſt; and to have proved it to the Jews by pertinent quotations out of the Old Teſtament, as St. Peter does in his diſcourſe. But how could they have done this, if the Holy Ghoſt had not alſo given them the word of knowledge, any more than they could have taught the Chriſtian ſcheme without the word of wiſdom? For, whatever our Saviour had ſaid in his life-time, or during the forty days he abode with them after his reſurrection, it is plain, they did not underſtand the nature of his ſpiritual kingdom, or the meaning of the prophecies which related to it; ſince, after all that converſation, they aſked him, whether "he would at that time reſtore the kingdom to

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"Iſrael?" (Acts 1. 6.) And our Saviour thought them yet ſo incapable of hearing his inſtructions about the true nature of his kingdom, that he does not ſee fit fully to correct their miſtake; but gives them an anſwer that might yet leave them ſome room to expect it. For, whilſt he gently reproves them for going ſo far as to aſk, whether he would at that time reſtore the kingdom to Iſrael? (for "it was not for them to "know the times and the ſeaſons, which the "Father has put in his own power") and whilſt he gently leads them into ſome farther notions about his kingdom, by inſinuating to them, that it was to be introduced by their witneſſing; yet he uſes words that might not quite preclude all their hopes of a temporal kingdom, though they were ſuch as might lead them to think it was to be begun by their witneſſing to him: for he tells them "they ſhould receive power, after that the "Holy Ghoſt was come upon them." So that if the Holy Ghoſt had not, after our Saviour's aſcenſion, given them the word of wiſdom and knowledge,

knowledge, they would have had little more to say, than to give their witneſs to the great facts of Chriſtianity: whereas they were not only to lay the foundation, and bring men to the truth, by witneſſing to thoſe facts; but they were to build up believers in that moſt holy faith: they were not only to plant, but to water; and make Chriſtians "grow in grace, and in the knowledge "of Jeſus Chriſt;" ſo as that they "might be "able to comprehend, with all ſaints, what was "the heighth, the depth, the length, and the "breadth of the love of God in Chriſt Jeſus the "Lord," and become fruitful in every good word and work: they were not only to teach this doctrine, and confirm it to the Jews, by places of the Old Teſtament, but it was neceſſary that they ſhould be able to remove all the ſcruples that might ariſe in the minds of the well-diſpoſed, by miſtaking the true ſenſe and meaning of the Law and the Prophets. And, therefore, they were farther, by the word of knowledge, fully to underſtand all the myſteries hid in them. They were DISC. IX.

DISC. IX. were alſo to be able to oppoſe gainſayers, eſpecially when they would endeavour to pervert the well-diſpoſed from the right ways of the Lord. And how was it poſſible for ignorant men, in a great meaſure uninſtructed by Jeſus, whilſt he was on earth, to have done all this without previous inſtruction, and long preparations of art and learning (and which could not in many inſtances have at all availed) but by the teaching of the Holy Ghoſt?

Thus the teſtimony, which the Spirit of God has given to the truth of the goſpel, contains a great variety of undeniable proofs, which St. Paul calls the power and demonſtration of the Spirit. The many large and particular prophecies, which, from the beginning of the world were dictated by the Spirit, concerning the perſon of our Saviour, and the nature, ſucceſs, and effects of his doctrine; the conception of our Lord by the miraculous operation of the Spirit, and the manifold wonders which attended his birth; the viſible

visible descent of the Spirit upon him at his baptism, accompanied with a voice from heaven, declaring him to be the beloved Son of God; the miracles which he worked during the course of his ministry, by the Spirit of God; as the scripture frequently expresses it; his resurrection from the dead, which likewise the scripture ascribes to the power of the same Spirit; but, above all, that most plentiful effusion of the Spirit upon the Apostles at Pentecost; whereby they were endued with power from on high, to preach the gospel with authority and efficacy; being enabled particularly to speak with tongues, and to do even greater works than our Saviour himself had worked upon earth, according to his promise which he made to them before his departure: now these testimonies of the Spirit of God contain the highest demonstrative proof of the truth of the gospel. This last miracle in particular, the gift of tongues to the Apostles, was the greatest and most affecting that could be conceived. The Apostles, on whom this gift DISC. IX.

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was beſtowed, were men, whoſe parentage and education were well known to all that dwelt at Jeruſalem; they were known to be illiterate and mean perſons; perſons, whoſe employment had been laborious, and their manner of life, from the beginning, ſuch as afforded them neither time nor opportunities of being ſkilled in the learning and cuſtoms of their own country, much leſs of having ſtudied the languages of other nations. Had they been men of a polite and learned education, brought up in the ſtudy of their own law, and in the ſchools of the ſcribes and phariſees, it might have been imagined that this great ſkill in foreign languages might be the effect of ſtudy and induſtry, of art and deſign, in order to gain applauſe from the people, and ſet themſelves up as heads of new ſects, and teachers of popular doctrines. But ſo far from this was the caſe, that, on the contrary, they were deſpiſed and contemned by their own countrymen, for this very reaſon, becauſe, being well acquainted with their education and manner

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of life, they did not think it poſſible that any wiſdom could be found in them, or any knowledge proceed from their lips. Exactly as they had formerly ſaid of their Maſter, when he went up into the temple and taught; (St. John 7. 14) "How knoweth this man letters, having never "learned?" And (St. Mark 6. 2.) "From "whence hath this man theſe things; and what "wiſdom is this which is given unto him? Is "not this the Carpenter, the ſon of Mary, the "brother of James and Joſes, and of Juda and "Simon; and are not his ſiſters here with us?" Herein, therefore, conſiſted the greatneſs of the miracle, that men of no education ſpake different languages perfectly; and that they did it immediately, and at once, without any time, inſtruction or ſtudy. Neither was there any room for any fallacy or deceit in the matter: "for the thing was not done in a corner;" but publicly, in the midſt of Jeruſalem, and in the preſence of innumerable witneſſes: and that not once only, but with a continued and permanent

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effect. The witneſſes alſo, that were preſent, were the beſt and moſt competent judges that could be; being perſons of different nations, gathered together at Jeruſalem upon account of the feaſt; to whom all the languages, which the apoſtles ſpoke, were ſeverally natural; ſo that they could not be deceived, or impoſed upon, in the whole proceeding. The natives of Jeruſalem, who underſtood not the tongues which were ſpoken, nor knew whether they were really any languages at all, might indeed mock, and ſay, that "theſe men were full of new "wine:" (Acts 2. 13.) but the foreigners, who heard each his own proper language, could not but be juſtly filled with wonder and amazement.

The inhabitants of Jeruſalem were witneſſes that the Apoſtles were illiterate men, and underſtood no language but their mother-tongue, nor were capable of uſing any art or fraud in this matter: and the ſtrangers were witneſſes, that what

what they uttered were true and real languages; and, therefore, could not be the effect of wine or madneſs. The teſtimony, therefore, of both together made the miracle certain, unqueſtionable and manifeſt; and accordingly the effect of it was proportionably great: for ſo we read (Acts 2. 41.) "that the ſame day there were converted "about three thouſand ſouls." This was the immediate effect of the gift of tongues at that very time; and the uſefulneſs of it afterwards, was peculiar and more remarkable than of all miracles whatſoever: for this enabled the Apoſtles to preach the goſpel to all nations, with ſuch ſpeed and incredible ſucceſs, that, though men of other religions endeavoured to make converts, as well as they, and ſome ſects of the Jews particularly were infinitely induſtrious, and would compaſs ſea and land to gain a proſelyte; yet the preaching of the Apoſtles, like the day-ſpring from on high, like the morning-light, which in a moment diſpels the darkneſs from under one end of heaven to the other, propagated the goſ- DISC. IX.

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DISC. IX. pel in a very few years to a vaſtly larger extent, than ever any other religion was propagated in the compaſs of many ages. This gift of tongues ceaſed, indeed, after ſome time, as other miracles did; becauſe all theſe ſorts of gifts were beſtowed not for their own ſakes or intrinſic worth, but only in order to the propagation of the goſpel, and to convince men of the truth of that religion, whoſe principal end and deſign conſiſted in thoſe gifts and graces of the ſpirit which were to continue for ever: which end being once obtained, and the goſpel eſtabliſhed in the world, theſe miraculous gifts ceaſed; having been given, as St. Paul expreſſes it, "not "for them that believe, but them that believe "not." But thoſe gifts of the ſpirit, in which conſiſts the renewal of the mind of man, and which are the ſprings of all virtues which make us like unto God; theſe are to continue through all ages; and are ſo much more excellent and deſirable than the former, as the end is better and more excellent than the means. In our Saviour's

Saviour's and in the Apoſtle's time, it was very natural to the weakneſs of men, to be moſt ambitious of ſuch gifts, as made the greateſt appearance, and could not but gain the greateſt eſteem and applauſe in the eyes of the world. But our Saviour himſelf cautioned his diſciples, not to rejoice ſo much at their being endued with the power of working miracles, as at their names being written in heaven: and St. Paul afterwards took great pains to convince his hearers, that, though it was indeed lawful to covet miraculous gifts, yet he could ſtill ſhew unto them a more excellent way; that it was a greater and far more deſirable thing, to inſtruct men in their plain and neceſſary duty, than to work the moſt ſtupendous miracles; and that love and goodneſs, righteouſneſs and holineſs, meekneſs and charity, were things more excellent and valuable in themſelves, than to be able to ſpeak with all the tongues of men or angels. Let us, then, by charity and goodneſs, and the practice of all virtues, ſecure to ourſelves that which is moſt excellent; and

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then, though the gifts of miracles be not continued to us, yet we ſhall obtain the end for which alone thoſe gifts have ever been given to others. For he, that ſpeaks with tongues for the converſion of others, may (without the virtues of meekneſs and humility, love and charity) himſelf poſſibly become a caſt-away. But he, whoſe mind is endued with thoſe inward virtues, which are the more excellent gifts and fruits of the Spirit, has attained that end, for the promoting of which the other outwardly brighter and more reſplendent gifts were all intended but as a means.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE X.

THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST.

JOHN I. 18.

No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

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IT is very plain, according to ſcripture, the ſcripture of the New Teſtament, that there is in the Divine Being (that infinite and eternal Being and perfection that is in the world) a real diſtinction of perſons, ſuch as we of ourſelves ſhould not have been able to conceive; that the fountain of all being and power produced from himſelf, from all eternity, not this world

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immediately, but that Being who is called his Son, "the brightneſs of his glory, and the express image of his perſon, by whom the world "was made;" and that in this Deity beſides there is a Spirit, which is divine; which is ſpoken of as a diſtinct perſon. Now how this thing may be conceived, or made plainer than it is in ſcripture, I ſhall not endeavour to ſhew; becauſe it is not neceſſary that we ſhould underſtand it; or indeed that we ſhould underſtand ſo much of the divine nature itſelf; when we are really ignorant of every thing elſe; when we do not know the real nature or eſſence of any thing that is in the world. I ſhall think it ſufficient, at this time, to ſhew plainly what is ſaid in ſcripture of that Divine Perſon, who has manifeſted himſelf to men, and has revealed himſelf not only to the underſtandings of men, but even to their eyes and ſenſes at different times, and in ſuch manner as he thought fit; and to explain this, which is ſaid in my text, that "no man hath ſeen God at any time," and what is ſaid in other places of ſcripture,

ture, "that God is invisible; that him no man hath "seen, or can see; but that the only begotten "Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath "declared him:" he hath not only himself seen and known him, but he hath made him known and represented him to men; which appears by the rest of the scripture. For what will be said in this manner, as it will be easily drawn from scripture, will be very plain, and will be of use to shew us the infinite goodness of him, who has so far condescended to men; and the great excellence and advantage of our religion above every thing that our own understanding and reason could have taught us. DISC. X.

For though it is said in my text, that "no "man hath seen God at any time," and, in other places, that "no man can see him;" yet it is certain, that in the scripture the Divine Being, he, who is ever called God, and represents him in all his power and attributes, has thought proper to appear to men, or to manifest and reveal him-

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ſelf to them in the plain and propereſt ſenſe, which is generally the true ſenſe of the ſcripture. For, firſt of all, it is plainly ſaid, that, in the time of man's innocence, the ſame Divine Being, who made the world, (in a certain order and manner) appeared to man, whom he made, and converſed with him; of which we ſee ſeveral inſtances. It was in ſome viſible form, and ſenſible appearance, that he is ſaid to have brought the creatures before Adam, (to try him, as it is ſaid, what ſenſe and underſtanding he would ſhew) and who brought to him afterwards another creature, like himſelf, and more ſuitable and proper company for him. It is evident that he judged our firſt parents afterwards in perſon; and that it was this appearance of God, which before they thought it their happineſs to ſee, that they were now afraid of, and from which they now hid themſelves. It appears plainly, that even afterwards, when man was removed from Paradiſe, yet this viſible and extraordinary preſence of God was not removed, but dwelt in another place; *that* place, where

Cain

Cain and Abel brought their offerings, when one was rejected and the other received with ſome ſenſible marks of favour or diſpleaſure. And when Cain is puniſhed for his crime, this is what he laments chiefly, that from this preſence he ſhould be hid; which muſt be this extraordinary preſence; which was ſenſible and in a certain place; for from the Spirit, and univerſal preſence and power of God he could not think he ſhould in any place be hidden. It is probable, that this viſible preſence continued and reſided for ſome time in the world, and that thoſe perſons lived in this preſence, who are ſaid "to walk with God," and are called his children or family, while the offſpring and ſucceſſors of Cain deſpiſed it, or thought the offerings and ſervice required too troubleſome. They lived, it is moſt probable, at firſt, with a natural and reaſonable religion only, which, becauſe it is not ſuitable to the common apprehenſions of men, however truly founded in reaſon, could not continue long, but would ſoon be ſucceeded by idolatry, as it was afterwards in

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not conſider at preſent in what manner this appearance was made; but what is of conſequence to us is this; that this Divine Being, who appeared before in ſuch a manner, as he thought proper, in infinite goodneſs, to make himſelf viſible to men, is the ſame, who afterwards, in due time, with ſtill greater abaſement and condeſcenſion, took our nature itſelf upon him, and was born into the world. This is that which makes the ſcripture clear, and explains what is ſaid in my text; that "no man hath ſeen God at any time;" and yet a Divine Being, he, who made the world, and he, who is called God in the Old Teſtament, he appeared, was heard and ſeen by men, at different times, as is evident in the Old Teſtament. It is the ſame perſon, who appeared afterwards in human nature itſelf, with all its infirmities, ſin only excepted; and who, it appears now, and not before, had a Father, to whom he had made himſelf anſwerable for this creature whom he made; for whom he came now into the world, even in human nature itſelf, to make

ſatisfaction

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ſatisfaction for him. It is in this manner that we can ſee moſt plainly, and moſt according to ſcripture, that there is a diſtinction in the perſons of the Deity; that he, who came into the world, and became real man, was alſo God: ſince it was he, who in the beginning made the heavens and the earth by his Father's will and appointment, as it now appears to us; and ſince it was he, who appeared always in the character of God, with all his power and greatneſs, but condeſcending to be known by men, and to converſe with them, in ſuch a manner, as is moſt ſuitable to them. It is ſufficient for us to know, that he, who is our Saviour, and appeared in the world, is that Divine Being, who made the heavens and the earth; and who has all the attributes of God aſcribed to him in the ſcripture, except that he acknowledges God to be his Father, which is learnt from the New Teſtament.

I think that what has been ſaid may be a means to prevent any unneceſſary enquiries, at the ſame time

time that it ſhews us the excellence and advantage of our religion; which is this, that it gives us an object that is more ſenſible, and may be more affecting to us, than any underſtanding or knowledge that we can have of God by our reaſon and natural faculties. We ſee by our religion, that, as there is a Divine Perſon, who is the fountain of all goodneſs and perfection, who hath not ſhewn himſelf to men, but dwells in light which no man can approach unto, ſo there is another Divine Perſon, by whom the firſt fountain of goodneſs has choſen to manifeſt himſelf to the world, and by whom he made the world. This Divine Perſon, who made the world, is the ſame, as it appears plainly, who afterwards is concerned for it, and who, while man continued in innocence, was preſent with him, and governed and directed him; he was a preſent and manifeſt God, and his preſence, without doubt, was intended then to be his greateſt happineſs. We know that hereafter it is ſaid that we ſhall ſee God, and that we ſhall live

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Disc. X. in his preſence, and that by this means chiefly we ſhall be happy. In the mean time it is a great advantage to us to know, that there is a God, who has appeared, and who has made himſelf ſenſible to men, and who at laſt was manifeſted even in human nature; who was born, and lived with men, who converſed with them, laying aſide his glory; whoſe life and actions we can ſee, and ſee his goodneſs manifeſted in the plaineſt and moſt human manner. This is not an obſcure or difficult religion, as ſome object; but the plaineſt and moſt adapted to human nature that is poſſible: we have a Divine Perſon and a Saviour, who has brought himſelf down, in the moſt familiar and the plaineſt manner: and we can have no objection to this, unleſs we really love more obſcure and difficult things for our underſtanding; and unleſs this condeſcenſion of God to men is too great for us to conceive. But of this it ſhould be conſidered, firſt of all, that our meaſures are not the ſame with thoſe of God: that what may appear too much to us may be no

to more than he will think moſt proper for him. And another thing is, that in whatever manner God will think fit to ſhew himſelf to men, or to bring them into acquaintance with him, it cannot be but by infinite condeſcenſion; for we cannot be capable of knowing him as he is in himſelf. It is not, therefore, too much that God ſhould condeſcend, as it appears in the Old Teſtament, to ſpeak, to converſe with our firſt parents, and afterwards, on ſo many occaſions, to manifeſt himſelf by a viſible preſence: nor, at laſt, which was the greateſt of all condeſcenſion, that he ſhould appear in human nature itſelf, and live and dwell with men. DISC. XI.

Now, ſince God has brought himſelf down to us, we ought to conſider how much we are obliged to acknowledge this goodneſs, and eſpecially to love and honour that perſon, who has made himſelf ſo familiar to us; and who in all reſpects is ſo fit an object and ſuitable to our affections. We ſhould not deſpiſe that humility which God himſelf

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himſelf did not think unworthy of him: but muſt remember, that, while he is a man, he is a Divine Perſon. Even his ſufferings we ſhould not think to be too much on our account. But from hence we ſhould conceive his goodneſs, his immenſe love and condeſcenſion. We know that his ſufferings were for the greateſt and beſt end; to reſtore us to pardon and to favour; that he might have a right with God, with his Father, eſtranged from men by their ſins, by their fall from him; that he might have a right with him to bring us into favour again, to obtain pardon and forgiveneſs for us. That in him we ſhould have an object, that is not too great to conceive or to live with and to enjoy hereafter. For we can conceive ſuch a Being, ſuch as he is repreſented to us; we may think that we can live with him, if he will think us worthy; or, if with all that he has yet done for us, with all his condeſcenſion to us, we are yet too low; if we are yet unworthy to be admitted to his preſence; we know from what he has done already, if we are feeble,

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he himſelf will ſtoop to us, he will make himſelf known and familiar to us. ("We ſhall be "like him," it is ſaid, "for we ſhall ſee him, "as he is.") After what has been ſaid upon this ſubject, if you will conſider it likewiſe yourſelves, you muſt perceive, that, by this diſtinction in the Divine Nature, religion is made plainer and more affecting than it could otherwiſe have been. DISC. X.

The things are certainly plain, if we conſider them plainly; I mean the things the ſcripture ſhews and dwells upon, which are ſuch as I have ſpoken of. For the ſcripture informs us that our Saviour Chriſt is God; that he is the Son of God; that he has the fulneſs of God in him; that he is "Immanuel, or God manifeſted to us." It informs us, that the end of what he did was to reconcile us to God; to bring us to the love of God and of our duty, by kindneſs and by mercy ſhewn. It does not ſtay to conſider, or to explain, difficult things, that are above our comprehenſion,

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prehenſion, which are only neceſſary to be mentioned to us, and to be believed, as they are the foundation of our hope, our truſt, and our joy. Thus it appears, that our religion is plain. Becauſe, though the things themſelves are difficult, and it is impoſſible they ſhould not be ſo, when there is nothing elſe in the world that we underſtand, yet our religion is plain, becauſe it does not require us to underſtand ſuch things; but ſets other things before us, which are plain, but great and affecting. Beſides, what is ſaid of the Son of God, which I have conſidered, nothing can be more plain, or more agreeable to our natural conceptions than the office which the ſcriptures aſſign to the Spirit of God, to ſupport, to direct us, and to lead us into all truth.

And this is that important practical doctrine, which muſt teach us a dependence upon God and not upon ourſelves. What the Son of God has done, that he died to obtain our pardon and favour, ſhould teach us the pureſt humility: we learn

learn from hence, that it was impoſſible we ſhould by any merit of our own, or by any repentance itſelf, be able to reſtore ourſelves. We muſt receive our pardon from God, as through the merit of his Son our Saviour. Then, when we are forgiven, the Spirit of God and of his Son is afforded us, to be our aid and help to deliver us from ſin, to ſtrengthen and exalt our natures. This ſhews, that even then, when we are reſtored to God's favour, we cannot continue in it, but by the divine help. That, therefore, we muſt live in continual dependence upon God; and, if we glory, muſt glory in him; if we truſt, we muſt truſt only in his faithfulneſs and goodneſs, that he will not forſake nor withdraw his power and aſſiſtance from us. In all views of our religion, it appears, that all high thoughts, all love or deſire of greatneſs, except that which is in the fear of God, and faith and dependence upon him, are forbidden: we are to lay ourſelves down, and to humble ourſelves before God: for it is he only that can raiſe us up, and ſet us above all worldly things. DISC. X.

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THE RITE OF CONFIRMATION.

MARK x. 14, 15.

But, when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God.

Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.

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OUR Saviour said this upon the occasion of some very young children being brought to him, that he might touch them; or, as it is in St. Matthew;

Matthew; "that he might lay his hands on "them" and pray for them. "And the disci- "ples," it is said, "rebuked those who brought "them;" they did not consider the use that this could be of to children; and perhaps thought it would be a trouble to their Master. But our Saviour allowed it, that he might not discourage the zeal and the good opinion of him which they had who brought them to him. But chiefly we may suppose for another reason: the same as when perceiving an ambition and pride in his disciples, he took a young child, and set him before them, and said, "Except ye be converted and become "as this child, ye shall not enter into the king- "dom of heaven." So now, on children being brought to him, he took the opportunity to teach the same doctrine; which implies not only that young persons are capable of religious instruction, but that, in some respects, they are even more capable than others are; since others (he has said) must become like them, in some respects, to receive the kingdom of God. And as I think DISC. XI.

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this doctrine of our Saviour both remarkable in itself, as it may be very well understood not of children only, but of young persons, and very proper upon this occasion, when such young persons are now called to be *confirmed*; to profess, and to take upon them, their religion, the rule of their duty, and the foundation of all their hope, I shall endeavour to shew—

1st. That young persons, as soon as they come to the use of their understanding or reason in other things, are very capable of being taught the great duties and doctrines of religion, so far as to see the excellence and importance of it to their own good and happiness.

2dly. That in some respects they are more capable or better disposed to receive the best and purest doctrine, than they may be afterwards; for which reason, it is necessary that they should be taught, and should undertake the great duties of

of their religion in their early youth; or that in ſuch a thing there ought to be no unneceſſary delays. DISC. XI.

Now that young perſons very early, as ſoon as they come to the uſe of their underſtanding in other things, are capable of being taught the great duties and doctrines of their religion, ſo far as to ſee the excellence and the importance of it, to their own good and happineſs; that this is ſo, I ſhall appeal only to experience, or to what every one may ſee in children or young perſons. It is evident that they can learn not only by heart or by memory what they read, or what is ſaid to them, but that they have a notion already of the firſt great duties, and of thoſe eſpecially which concern God; ſuch as to fear and to love him, and to pray to him; which are the beſt and higheſt duties, or the firſt and great commandment, as our Saviour has ſaid. It is evident, that they have a notion of theſe great duties, and are capable of being ſtruck with a fear and love of

DISC. XI. that great Being that made them, and that makes his ſun to ſhine, and the graſs to grow; and that gives them their food and raiment, and preſerves them from dangers.

So far as this it is plain that very young perſons and even children are capable of being taught. They know theſe things before or better than they know any other duty; before they have any notion of any happineſs or advantage from other things, except in thoſe merely that it is neceſſary for their preſervation that they ſhould know. And the reaſon of this is not that the knowledge of God and of our duty to him is leſs excellent or leſs difficult than any other knowledge is; for it is indeed a knowledge ſo excellent, that it would be impoſſible for any invention of men to conceive, or for the whole world itſelf to give us by any means this notion of a being and power that is ſuperior to it; and it is plainly God himſelf that made this knowledge or this firſt notion of himſelf natural to the mind of man: ſo that

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he not only has the ſeed of it within him, but it riſes ſooner than many other notions, and is unavoidable. This, therefore, ſhews the excellence of this knowledge (which is wiſdom itſelf according to ſcripture) that it is what no other but God himſelf could give and make us capable of. And he has given the firſt beginnings of it ſo early, that it might the more appear to be his, and that we might from this itſelf conceive that it is given to be our guide and rule in every part of our life. And though it is given ſo early, (*i. e.* the firſt ſeeds or the beginnings of it) yet that it is capable of infinite or continual improvement, we may know from the very notion which we have of God, as being himſelf infinite and perfect, comprehending in himſelf every thing that is good, and that can be the object of real knowledge; from that great depth of wiſdom and knowledge that appear in his works, and in his order and government of the world. DISC. XI.

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I mean, therefore, no more than that very young perſons are very capable of a beginning in this higheſt and moſt excellent of all knowledge, the knowledge of God and of our duty to him. They can know this very early, and even before it is yet proper that they ſhould undertake it: becauſe this requires ſome more conſideration, and ſome little experience, by which young perſons may be capable of making a deliberate choice and of a reſolution. Yet ſtill that it is proper to bring them on to ſuch a choice and conſideration as ſoon and as early as poſſible, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew now in the 2d place, by conſidering in what reſpect it is true that young perſons, by their youth itſelf, may be better diſpoſed, or have leſs hindrances, to the knowledge and practice of religion.

It is, indeed, more proper to ſay, that they have leſs hindrances than that they are better diſpoſed; becauſe religion is of all other the beſt and higheſt knowledge; it is indeed, the true excellence

excellence of our nature. It is certain, that the more our underſtanding and reaſon is ſtrengthened, the more the truth of religion and the force of its duties will appear. In general, therefore, and in itſelf, any improvement of real knowledge would be an advantage and an help to the better knowledge and practice of our *great* duty. But there is a knowledge and a reaſon that is very different from that of religion or a ſenſe of God and of our duty to him. And as this will not govern our lives and actions, which it is religion only that can do; ſo, if we are without this beſt knowledge, or without a regard to it, we ſhall find and we ſhall ſee by experience that other deſires and very different judgments of what is right or beſt for us will ariſe, and, by continuance and practice, will get ſtrength, and come to be *habits*; which we all know are ſtrong and hard to be overcome. And, if theſe are not only different from religion, but very ſtrong, and much more, if they are contrary, they muſt needs be hindrances, and will very much indiſpoſe us DISC. XI.

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us for the knowledge and practice of our duty. Now I will not dwell long to observe how other sins and passions grow up in young persons: and, if they are without religion, which only can govern and direct them right, that these must needs be strong, and get the better of every knowledge and every purpose that is contrary to them. When these grow up, we can easily understand that they are like the weeds, the thorns, and briers in our Saviour's parable, which choke the good seed, the knowledge of true good and ill, and that this must needs grow better in a mind that is pure and without these hindrances. But besides these, there are other hindrances, that grow up, and that increase the more as we go on in years, and that are great hindrances to religion; but which our early age is not so subject to; which, therefore, in this respect, is the most proper and best disposed for religion.

As men grow up and advance in years, they are first of all most liable to passions that draw aside

aſide the will, and tempt them, perhaps unwillingly, againſt their better judgment and conviction, to commit ſins. When they are advanced farther, by degrees their better ſenſe and their firſt knowledge is worn away, both for want of uſe, and of due regard being paid to it; and, becauſe they have ſeen things that ſeem to be contrary to thoſe notions of religion, which at firſt appear to be true, without conſidering, and, at laſt, upon the beſt conſideration, are found to be ſo, but in the diſordered courſe of this world do not appear; they ſee that vice and wickedneſs is not puniſhed; that they can do ill, and not ſuffer that puniſhment or ill which they once feared. They thought, perhaps, when they were young, that ſome immediate ill, or puniſhment, would fall upon them; they thought not only that God is every where, but that he did every thing himſelf; which laſt now they ſee many great and juſt reaſons to doubt. By theſe means men come by years, and by an experience not directed or guided by religion, not only to be violent

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violent and ſinful in their wills and paſſions, but to have even their judgment itſelf warped and made wrong: they propoſe to themſelves other things, ſome other knowledge, ſome other way of life, as better and more excellent than this which God himſelf had taught and directed them to; they imagine other knowledge, the knowledge of what is ſtrange and curious in natural things, or in things above us, and which is called vain knowledge, and which is indeed moſt vain, if it does not lead us to that which is the true conſequence, a better knowledge of God, the author and maker of this world, and of our duty to him. This is but ſeldom: however, it does happen ſometimes, that men come to admire more their own wiſdom in finding out things, a few of thoſe things which God has made, more than they do his wiſdom who made them.

Another wiſdom there is to which we are more ſubject as we grow up and advance in life; which, for want of acquaintance with true wiſdom, or

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of religion and its ways, has formed and eſta- DISC. XI.
bliſhed with itſelf another notion of happineſs and good. We come to think that he is at leaſt the happieſt if not the beſt, who, by any means, whether juſt or unjuſt, or at leaſt by worldly care and application, is able to obtain, or to ſecure to himſelf, the greateſt ſhare of whatever are the advantages and the pleaſures of this life. He glories in his riches, or he envies and admires them: he thinks that the deſire of theſe is wiſdom, and that to purſue this ſteadily, and not to be amuſed by any other conſideration, is prudence and underſtanding. We get a notion quite contrary to that of ſcripture and to true reaſon, by which the true wiſdom is ſeen to be *the fear of God*, and a truſt in him, and a reliance upon his goodneſs, and a hope of never-failing and true happineſs hereafter, if we ſhould miſs all that is loved and deſired in this preſent life. But if this wrong notion is grown ſtrong, and this falſe wiſdom is eſtabliſhed in our hearts, what ſhall we do to reform ſuch a perſon? Shall we tell him,

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him, that neither vice nor ſin, nor even worldly induſtry and ſkill in worldly affairs can ever ſucceed or proſper in worldly things? We cannot ſay this: or, if we ſay it, he will not believe what we ſay, when he ſees ſo many inſtances to the contrary; and has, perhaps, as yet, found no harm, as he thinks himſelf, in the ways of ſin and wickedneſs. What ſhall we do then? Shall we tell him, that ſinful pleaſure is deceitful, and is not happineſs; that a man's life conſiſteth not in the abundance of the things which he poſſeſſes? That there is a truer happineſs in contentment; that in the ſervice of God there is peace and ſatisfaction in this life; that he is miſtaken and deceived in his notion of happineſs and good? How will he be able to underſtand this; or who can convince him, that an happineſs and ſatisfaction, which he has never known, or has now forgotten, is better than that which he has experienced and finds in worldly things, though mixed with ſome troubles he may ſay, as that of religion is? That religion and goodneſs is happier than

than worldly joy and riches he could know only by experience; which he has not; for he has made no trial; or from some natural presumption, or opinion of his own mind, which he has lost; for he has formed to himself another opinion. Who then can persuade him of this strange and secret happiness, which he has never known, nor is disposed to believe wherever there may be any appearance of it? His notion is settled upon other things, upon other advantages and other pleasures of this life: and, if he cannot well conceive happiness here, it is plain he can have but very faint notions of any happiness hereafter; since that is not to arise from riches, nor from any pleasures or advantages of this life. It is plain, therefore, that such wisdom as this, when it is come to be well established and settled with any one, is very hard to be reclaimed, when this is confirmed to him by all the experience which he has had; and any sense or opinion of other happiness by long unacquaintance will be lost: who shall give him a new sense, and a new heart

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mind, which is now neceſſary, becauſe the firſt natural notions and the diſpoſition of his mind, are loſt, and are not to be recovered or reſtored to him except by him who firſt gave them? And though he can do all things, and will, when he thinks fit, break through his own order and courſe of things, yet we may ſuppoſe that it is his rule, that natural habits and incapacities, which we can bring on ourſelves, ſhall take their courſe; and that, what is difficult or impoſſible for men to do, we ſhall not have reaſon to depend upon from God. Leſt this, therefore, ſhould happen to any of us, let us take care as much as poſſible for ourſelves; let us conſider our ways and our own hearts, what it is that they deſire moſt. Let us deſire to obtain a new mind and a new heart, before we are gone too much aſtray. And let us take care for others, thoſe who are yet young; who are not yet corrupted by falſe wiſdom and the wrong notions of the world. They have, as I have ſaid, a natural notion of God and of duty to him, who is above this world, which is to be improved,

proved, and by which they are capable of understanding other things that God has made known to us; and they are able to conceive that the Son of God came into the world for our sins, and suffered and died to save us. They can understand all these deep and highest things in some measure, and as far as is necessary, even for a deliberate, settled purpose or choice. They can know, or can believe, that it is better to be happy in heaven, than to have any happiness in this world; which is harder for them to conceive. DISC. XI.

Let us, therefore, use our endeavours to persuade every one now to think of giving himself up to God and to that religion which promises him the best happiness even in this life, and is the most likely means to secure from worldly ill; from the real ills and miseries of a sinful life. Let every one teach this to those for whom he is concerned. It is our business to exhort you at such a time especially to do this; and we must

DISC. XI. endeavour to do our part, by inſtructing and preparing thoſe who are willing now to come, and to take their religion upon themſelves, to oblige themſelves to it ſolemnly, with prayers of the biſhop and congregation for God's bleſſing and grace.

Young perſons, that intend to be confirmed, ſhould think now of the vow they made in baptiſm; of the promiſes they then made by their ſureties. Their confirmation is, in fact, their taking upon themſelves that vow, as the preface to that office in the Common Prayer Book declares. They ſhould, therefore, carefully read over and conſider that office, and the anſwers they are expected to make to the queſtions then ſolemnly aſked: they ſhould read over with attention the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments; and let them add to this the fifth, ſixth, and ſeventh chapters of St. Matthew's Goſpel; and they will have read a brief and moſt excellent expoſition of Chriſtian doc-

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trine by Chriſt himſelf. Let young perſons come to this rite with ſerioufneſs and devotion, and thus ſolemnly prepared; and they may expect that God's bleſſing and grace will attend it. DISC. XI.

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THE EXCELLENCY OF THE LAW OF THE JEWS.

PSALM XIX. 9, 10, 11.

The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether: more to be desired are they than gold; yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb: moreover by them is thy servant taught; and in keeping of them there is great reward.

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IT is remarkable with how great delight and veneration the writers of the Old Teſtament ſpeak of that law and that divinely appointed religion under which they lived. In this Pſalm we have one remarkable inſtance. For when the author

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author of it had ſpoken in the beginning of that inſtruction in the knowledge of God, which we have from his works of the creation,—"the hea-"vens declare the glory of God, and the firma-"ment ſheweth his handy work; one day telleth "another and one night certifieth another; they "have neither ſpeech nor language, and yet their "ſound is gone out into all lands, and their "words into the ends of the world:" After this, he ſpeaks of the law of God, that which was given unto the Jews; he ſpeaks of it as of a peculiar bleſſing and benefit, and the means of more particular and fuller inſtruction. "The "law of the Lord is an undefiled law, converting "the ſoul; the teſtimony of the Lord is ſure, "and giveth wiſdom unto the ſimple: the ſtatutes "of the Lord are right and rejoice the heart: "the commandment of the Lord is pure and "giveth light unto the eyes; the fear of the "Lord is clean, and endureth for ever; the "judgments of the Lord are true and righteous "altogether. More to be deſired are they than

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"gold; yea, than much fine gold; ſweeter alſo "than honey and the honeycomb: moreover "by them is thy ſervant taught, (or warned) and "in keeping of them there is great reward." The 119th Pſalm is altogether on this ſubject. It is a commendation of this law from God and of that religion which he had taught and preſcribed; which is there commended with great variety of expreſſion, and ſuch as ſhews great ſincerity and affection in the writer of it. Some of the expreſſions are ſuch as theſe—(ver. 33.) "Teach "me, O Lord, the way of thy ſtatutes; give "me underſtanding, and I ſhall keep thy law. "Make me to go in the path of thy command-"ments; for therein is my delight." And again, (ver. 97.) "Oh, how I love thy law! all the "day long is my ſtudy in it. I have refrained "my feet from every evil way, that I might keep "thy word. How ſweet are thy words unto my "taſte, yea ſweeter than honey unto my mouth! "Through thy precepts I get underſtanding; "therefore I hate every evil way." And, that I may

I may conclude this point, in another Pſalm, (147) after mentioning, as in the firſt inſtance, ſome of God's natural operations, which ſhew his power; "He giveth ſnow like wool and ſcattereth "the hoar-froſt like aſhes; he caſteth out his "ice like morſels: who is able to abide his "froſt?" After theſe, his law and his religion are commended as a peculiar bleſſing and benefit to his people. "He ſheweth his *word* "unto *Jacob*, his *ſtatutes* and *judgments* unto "*Iſrael*: he hath not dealt ſo with any of the "nations, neither have the heathen knowledge "of his laws." DISC. XII.

Now, if the Jews were themſelves ſo ſenſible of the bleſſing and benefit of their law, and that religion which they had by God's appointment; (and yet ſome now think, that this law and religion was in itſelf unworthy of God, and in its effects was rather hurtful than beneficial to that people) it may be proper to conſider how this thing is.

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I ſhall endeavour, as far as I am able, from the words I have read to you, to ſhew, 1ſt, That a law and religion, ſo inſtituted and enforced by divine authority, as that of the Jews was, was fitted to produce a more careful and exact obedience than can be expected from any law or religion without ſuch enforcement,

2dly, That the law of the Jews, though burdened with many rites and ceremonies, yet was itſelf more truly religious and moral than any other law and religion; and that, accordingly, in fact, it did produce among the Jews more true piety and goodneſs, than was produced by any law or religion among the Gentiles.

And 3dly, That the religious and moral part of the law, as it appears to us in the writings of the Old Teſtament, is ſtill to thoſe who live under the goſpel a moſt valuable and uſeful part of ſcripture, and which ought to be diligently read and conſidered.

1ſt. That

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1ſt. That a law ſo enforced by divine authority, as that of the Jews was, was fitted to produce a more careful and exact obedience than can be expected from any other law or religion without ſuch enforcement.

Though we may eaſily know, and find by experience, that the dictates and diſcoveries of natural reaſon want ſome farther enforcement and authority; yet it is not eaſy for us to conceive, or to judge before-hand, in what manner this additional enforcement ought to be: now, in order to judge of this, the beſt way is to ſet before us the manner in which God thought fit to manifeſt himſelf to the Jews, and to give additional authority to the law which he gave them. Now, according to the hiſtory of the Bible, it is certain, that there have been, from the beginning of the world, divine appearances, and a law given by divine authority, of which we do not perhaps know the whole; but the manner of worſhip by ſacrifice plainly was one part: and that

this

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this law and worſhip of God was farther enforced at that time by God's extraordinary interpoſition appears at leaſt in one inſtance; that of Enoch's being taken up to heaven; and afterwards, by his deſtroying the world for its great wickedneſs, by bringing the flood upon them in an extraordinary manner. After this, God appeared to their fathers, to *Abraham*, *Iſaac*, and *Jacob*, taking them into a peculiar covenant, and promiſing to be the God of their poſterity. And the reaſon why he choſe the chief and firſt of them is thus expreſſed: (Gen. 18. 19.) "For I know him, "that he will command his children and his "houſehold after him, and they ſhall keep the "way of the Lord, to do juſtice and judgment; "that the Lord may bring upon *Abraham*, that "which he hath ſpoken of him." As the memory of theſe extraordinary favours and interpoſitions of God with their fathers was thus preſerved, at leaſt by tradition, in the more early times, and afterwards, as we know, committed to writing; their ſons and poſterity had the benefit

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and effect of theſe together with others which they themſelves experienced. And when, in due time, they were to be made a people, under God's peculiar government, and under his law, they were delivered from their hard bondage in Egypt, by miracles and wonders; they were led through the ſea, and through the wilderneſs, by God's manifeſt power and preſence; and the law was given with ſuch ſigns and proofs of divine authority, as could not be counterfeited nor queſtioned. This preſence of God, or his appearance at ſeveral times, and on particular occaſions, and ſuch a ſucceſſion of miracles, as ſhewed his immediate power preſiding over them, was continued afterwards in ſuch a manner, that there was ſcarce any time, but they had ſome *ſign*, or ſome *prophet*, ſpeaking to them with divine authority. Now, that a law given in this manner, and enforced by a continual manifeſtation or proof of God's preſence and power, was fitted to produce a more careful and exact obedience, than can be expected from any law or religion, without ſuch

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enforcement,

DISC. XIX. enforcement, from any doctrine or rule of life, which depends ſolely upon human reaſon and human appointment, cannot, I ſuppoſe, admit of any doubt. For we may eaſily conceive what force it muſt have, when it could be ſaid to them, as it is ſaid, (Deut. 4. 32, &c.) "Aſk now of "the days that are paſt, ſince the time that God "created man upon the earth; and aſk from "one ſide of heaven unto the other; whether "there hath been any ſuch thing, as this great "thing is, or hath been heard like it? Did ever "any other people hear the voice of God, ſpeaking "out of the midſt of the fire, as thou haſt heard, "and live? Or hath God aſſayed to go and "take him a nation from the midſt of another "nation, by temptations, by ſigns, and by won-"ders, according to all that the Lord your God "did for you, in Egypt, before your eyes? Know, "therefore, this day, and conſider it in your "heart, that the Lord he is God, in heaven "above, and upon earth beneath; there is none "elſe. Thou ſhalt keep his ſtatutes and his

"commandments

"commandments which I command thee this "day." It cannot be thought that any enforcement could be added to the law of God, more proper or more likely to be effectual than such considerations as these; and, if a law, so enforced and recommended, had not always the effects that might be expected, we must think it was owing, not to the want of authority, (for it had the greatest that could be given it) but either to some particular corruption of this people, or to the general one of mankind; either of which may be supposed, without impeachment of the wisdom and goodness of God, who took so great care of them; or else, it must have been owing to some imperfection in the law itself; and that the nature and spirit of it was not such as was fitted to produce any great degree of real piety and goodness. But this cannot be truly said. Which I shall now endeavour to shew, as was proposed in the second place;

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2dly, That

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2dly. That the law of the Jews, though burdened with many rites and ceremonies, yet was in its nature truly religious and moral; and that, accordingly, in fact, we have reaſon to think it *did* produce among that people more true piety and goodneſs than was produced by any law or religion among the Gentiles.

That the law given to the Jews was in its nature more truly religious and moral than the law or religion of any other people will appear ſufficiently, if we conſider firſt of all, that this was the only law or public inſtitution that taught and commanded the worſhip of one God, as the Creator and Lord of heaven and earth; and taught this worſhip in a right ſpirit and in a juſt degree. It taught men "to love God with all "their heart, with all their ſoul, with all their "mind, and with all their ſtrength:" to love him firſt of all, and above all things: which was underſtood by themſelves, "to be the firſt and "great commandment." It taught men to love God

God for his general goodneſs, as maker and governor of the world; and, as was beſides juſt and reaſonable, for his particular goodneſs, deliverances and favour to themſelves. And what is moſt of all remarkable, it is a ſpirit of love, or of duty and obedience to God, which runs through all the other commands of this law, ſo as to make every other duty religious, and to make this as much as poſſible the one governing principle of men's lives and actions. That this is right, and as it ought to be in a divine law, will be confeſſed by any one, who conſiders that this muſt needs be the beſt and higheſt principle of every action, where it can take place, and that it does not interfere with any other motive that is juſt and good. It may eaſily be conceived, that when a right notion of God is ſet before men, and when it is expected that he ſhould be continually before our eyes and in our thoughts, this itſelf will be one and the beſt means of preſerving a due ſenſe and judgment of, as well as a regard to, whatſoever is right and good. For, in gene- DISC. XII.

Disc. XII. ral, a right notion of God will teach this. If we conſider in every action, what is agreeable to God, we ſhall never judge amiſs; except the religion itſelf be corrupt; which certainly was the caſe among the heathens, who worſhipped ſuch gods, as were by no means patterns of goodneſs and virtue. In the religion of which we are ſpeaking; (whatſoever wrong judgment ſome make from the condeſcenſion of God when he ſpeaks and repreſents himſelf after the manner of men) the nature and deſcription of God is *holineſs and goodneſs*. There is no compariſon in this reſpect between this religion and any other that was ever publicly profeſſed. Beſides this, they were taught and commanded all duties of juſtice, goodneſs, and charity. For, though they were taught more eſpecially to be kind, and to love one another, yet that this was not taught in excluſion of other men is plain from ſuch precepts as theſe; "Thou ſhalt not oppreſs the "hireling, nor the ſtranger that is among you; "but thou ſhalt remember, that thou thyſelf waſt "a ſtranger

"a ſtranger in the land of Egypt." As it was neceſſary that they ſhould be made a peculiar people, ſeparated from other nations by rites and ceremonies, as well as diſtinguiſhed by their religion itſelf, it might naturally happen, that they would confine too much the duties of love and charity among themſelves, or to their own nation. But as this partiality, which they had, was a means to keep them ſeparate from other nations, and uncorrupted by them, ſo they might from many things in their law have conceived better and truer notions: or, if any thing was wanting in this reſpect, it was only more explanation, which it afterwards received by the goſpel. On the other ſide, though their rites and ceremonies were burdenſome, and were one cauſe that ſometimes they revolted from God to other religions, which were more eaſy in this reſpect, yet this burden itſelf, it is probable, was neceſſary, as a yoke, to ſubdue their ſpirit; and we may alſo eaſily conceive, that it had a good effect, by teaching moral and ſpiritual things, which thoſe DISC. XII.

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rites and ceremonies repreſented: and, by uſing them to a continual exactneſs and obedience in theſe leſſer things, they would the more readily practiſe the higher inſtances of duty. And probably by this means it was, in ſome meaſure, but eſpecially by the purity and ſtrictneſs of their religious and moral doctrine, that this people, notwithſtanding their many faults, and their great obſtinacy and diſobedience at ſome times, yet appear, in general, to have been more religious, and more truly virtuous, than we have reaſon to think any heathen nation ever was. I do not pretend to compare the different accounts which we have of the Jews and of the heathen nations: but, in general, I think it is evident, that the *Jews* were more ſtrict and pure in their morals, than the generality of the heathens were: who, notwithſtanding their great knowledge and wiſdom in human things, it is certain, were farther ſunk into all kinds of exceſs, intemperance, and impurity, than ever the Jews were. The *Jews*, by their *religion*, were preſerved from thoſe crimes,

crimes, from which the *heathens* were not by their *wisdom*. That the Jews loved their country, or their own nation, as much as any of the Gentiles ever did, and upon as good principles, cannot be diſputed. And, in general, that they had a great degree of real piety, and a conſcientious regard to what was right, and very excellent morals, may juſtly be concluded from thoſe parts of ſcripture, and thoſe ſeveral writings, which came after their firſt law; and which, therefore, are the moſt proper things to ſhew the effects which it had. Such are the Pſalms, the Proverbs, the Books of their Prophets, and other later things; which ſhew evidently ſuch a ſtrain of good morals and of real piety, as does not appear to have been ſo general, or ſo habitual to any other people. And at the ſame time it is to be obſerved, that theſe writings were made a part of their law, and are juſtly to be conſidered as a part, or as an explanation and improvement of it. And when theſe writings are thus conſidered, the whole appears to be more evidently fitted to produce the

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moſt real piety and goodneſs: and there is from theſe writings, as well as from other reaſons, ſufficient ground to conclude, that the law and religion of the *Jews* did, in fact, produce more real piety and goodneſs than was ever produced by any public law or religion among the heathens.

And if this has been proved ſufficiently, or ſo that it will readily be acknowledged to be true, what remains is to ſhew, as I propoſed in the third place,

3dly. That the religious and moral part of the law, as it appears to us in the writings of the Old Teſtament, is ſtill, to thoſe who live under the goſpel, a moſt valuable and uſeful part of ſcripture, and which ought to be diligently read and conſidered.

For, though thoſe rites and ceremonies, which were burdenſome, or difficult to be performed,

have been taken away, by God's favour and kindneſs to men in the goſpel; and thoſe, which ſignified a future meritorious ſacrifice and redemption, have been made altogether unneceſſary, by the real completion of them to us under the goſpel; yet ſtill the moral part remains, and is of the ſame force to inſtruct, and reprove, and admoniſh, as it was formerly to the *Jews*. It is plainly of the ſame force now that it ever was, and it cannot be made unneceſſary by what is the ſame; only it is explained more clearly and ſtill farther enforced by peculiar motives in the goſpel. DISC. XII.

The *whole* ſacred ſcripture is that which we are obliged, as it contains our higheſt intereſt, to read and to conſider. For, as to the New Teſtament, the words of our Saviour himſelf and the doctrine of his Apoſtles, there is no doubt. But the ſcriptures of the Old Teſtament are what *St. Paul* meant, when he ſaid, that "every part "of ſcripture is by inſpiration of God, and is

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" profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for cor-
" rection, for inſtruction in righteouſneſs; that
" the man of God," the teacher of religion eſpecially, " may be perfect, thoroughly furniſhed
" unto all good works."

DISCOURSE

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THE FIRST AND GREAT COMMANDMENT.

MATTHEW XXII. 37, 38.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.

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IT is our proper duty, as miniſters of the goſpel, to ſpeak of that which is properly religion; the worſhip and ſervice of God; and to ſhew the reaſon and excellency of this ſervice or duty; how neceſſarily it is joined with all our other duty, and with our happineſs and true enjoyment of ourſelves even in this preſent life,

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as well as in a future one; ſince what is preſent, though of leſs conſequence, by being preſent, is naturally apt to have an effect upon us: and, ſince we ſhould naturally expect, from the wiſdom and goodneſs of God, that his ſervice ſhould not, generally ſpeaking, be without ſome reward, ſome natural advantages in the preſent time;

1ſt. I ſhall, therefore, in the firſt place, endeavour to ſhew, that religion is the employment not only of our love, but of all our good and beſt affections, upon an object that is perfect and ſufficient for all: for this will be the excellence of religion, if it is the beſt and higheſt employment of our whole mind; and if, for this reaſon, it can be of force in every condition and circumſtance of our lives.

2dly. I ſhall ſhew, that this employment of our minds upon the beſt and one perfect object muſt needs be the higheſt virtue and goodneſs; and that it muſt naturally be the means of the higheſt happineſs and ſatisfaction.

And

And first of all I am to shew, that religion is the employment not only of love, but of all our good affections, upon an object that is perfect and sufficient for all. For this will be the excellence of religion, if it is the best and highest employment of our whole mind; and if, for this reason, it can be of force in every condition and circumstance of our lives. DISC. XIII.

The natural notion that we have of God is that of a Being who is above this world; supreme and perfect in power, wisdom, and goodness. If we enquire how such creatures, as men are, could obtain a notion or a capacity of knowledge that is so great and so much above us; it is certain, that we could never give this notion to ourselves; nor could the world give us what is so much above itself, and so different from it. It must be given us, therefore, by God himself, who made it natural to us, and who, by this capacity of religion, more than by any thing else, has distinguished us from the other creatures below us.

It

DISC. XIII. It is plain that this notion is natural to men, becauſe it is univerſal. If it was by ſearch or enquiry that men found it, ſome would be wanting in theſe means, and all would not agree. But when we have this notion or this capacity within us, the ſight of this world, as God's work, of the wiſdom, power, and goodneſs that appear in it; this ſerves to raiſe and confirm that notion of God, which is natural to our minds. Thus it is that "the inviſible things of God are ſeen "from the things that are made; even his eter- "nal power and Godhead." Thus "the heavens "declare the glory of God, and the firmament "ſheweth his handy work." The powers that we ſee in this world ſo much above us, the order and beauty of things, which are the effect of wiſdom and goodneſs, that degree of wiſdom or goodneſs that is in men, prove to us, that there is ſome ſuperior power, wiſdom and goodneſs, from which theſe proceed. And by our natural apprehenſions we conceive that this higheſt wiſdom, power, and goodneſs, is infinite and perfect.

Thus

Thus we have within ourſelves, and by our own conceptions we read in other things, and in every thing around us, the knowledge of God; of one univerſal and perfect Being, who by his nature and perfections muſt needs be the full and proper object of all our affections. DISC. XIII.

He is within us, in our minds, but is diſplayed and opened to us in his works. He is the natural object of honour and praiſe: for what elſe can we honour in compariſon to him? To admire God in his abſolute perfections, and to love him, for that goodneſs which is over all his works, is the pleaſure of a virtuous life: but to obey and ſerve him in ſuch actions as he requires is the buſineſs and duty of it. Man does not find himſelf alone, or with God only, in the world. He is one of many of the ſame kind, who, having the ſame nature, are objects of his duty and regard. He is joined to them not only by natural affection, but this bond of nature is drawn cloſer by great mutual indigence, and the moſt neceſſary dependence

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dependence of one upon the other. He finds himſelf, by the appointment of God and nature, already engaged by greater benefits to ſome, by nearer alliance and connection with others. It is often ſeen, that by theſe engagements and duties of life, by the variety and diſtraction of many objects, we loſe that view of God, which we had in private; but this is always our fault. But the notion of an univerſal, ſupreme, and perfect Being, if this is ready within us, can at all times be applied to our real condition. And it is evident from experience, that it has not the leſs enforced itſelf upon men, in this view of ſociety, and of mankind, as one ſpecies, in which we have the greateſt connection and concern.

This public religion is as natural as private. The union of mankind, with all the dependency, order, and government of the world, ſeems to be of God's appointment: but he is himſelf the ſupreme and perfect governor over all. We may eaſily

easily see that under himself he has given us our parts, however small and inconsiderable, which he cannot but demand and require that we should perform. If he is over all, he cannot but require that we should enter into his design, and not offend and oppose him by crimes and injuries to any one; and that we should serve him, by promoting good and happiness, according to that power and ability which he gives. He is our Lord and Master, and our Judge, as well as our Father, Creator, and Preserver. In this view, fear comes to be an essential part of religion: a fear in the first place of offending God; but afterwards a dread of his justice and his punishment, if we have offended. At the same time, in the midst of the world, we have the same reason to have our whole trust and hope in God. The public depends upon God and upon his providence, as one man. And, though men are in many respects the instruments of conveying or preserving his benefits to us, it is God who has the reins of their hearts and affections in his hands. DISC. XIII.

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hands. And thus prayer to God, which argues dependence upon him, is our natural duty; and not the leſs, becauſe we are ſurrounded with a world, that may ſeem to claim the diſpoſal of all our happineſs and good. The world and our employment in it cannot hide God from us, unleſs it be our own fault. But it requires more that we ſhould have the real force and power of religion in our minds.

It may appear from what has been ſaid, that, as religion is the employment of all our good and beſt affections, upon the beſt and only perfect object, ſo it is the principle that has its force and uſe at all times, on all occaſions, and in all circumſtances of our life; by which we may the better judge both of the nature and the excellence of it.

I ſhall now ſhew that this employment of our whole mind and affections upon God, as it is of the higheſt duty and obligation, ſo it is naturally

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the means of the beſt ſatisfaction and enjoyment of happineſs in this preſent life. DISC. XIII.

Nothing is more evident than this; that the excellence and perfection of any object, if we ſee and know it, demands the application of our affections in proportion. If, thereore, it is juſt to honour or to love any other object, it is infinitely more ſo to honour or to love God. We need not ſay that all obligation is only in reſpect of God. It ſeems plain, and, I think, cannot be denied, that, ſince the world is made as it is, there is a reaſon in every duty to ourſelves and to men, even without reſpect to religion, and when this is altogether laid aſide. And it is beſt for the world, that this reaſon and obligation ſhould be allowed; if by the force of this, when religion fails, the notion, and, in ſome degree, the practice of temperance, juſtice, natural equity, and kindneſs is preſerved. But, on the other ſide, this will be plain, that to ſerve God with all our affections that are good and due to him,

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is ſo far the higheſt obligation, as it is grounded on the higheſt reaſon. If this is indeed the higheſt obligation, and if this regard to God can by its nature be extended to every action and duty of life, (which has been ſaid) then it is plain, that it ought to enter into every one, and that morality is infinitely deficient and imperfect without it.

We need not wonder at this, that the affections and the goodneſs of men, who act upon *religious* principles, are more ſtrong, more perfect, and more ſincere, than the affections and goodneſs of thoſe who act upon other principles. It cannot be otherwiſe, if we conſider that the higheſt and perfect object, which is God, muſt needs produce the higheſt and ſtrongeſt affections. It muſt needs be, therefore, that, when we are thankful to God for the bleſſings of this life, then we are *truly thankful*, and enjoy them with true contentment and ſatisfaction: when we ſubmit, or reſign ourſelves, to God, then we are

truly

truly resigned and patient: when we do good for *his* ſake, then we do it with the greateſt affection and ſincerity. It muſt be ſo, becauſe the higheſt reaſon that we can have for thankfulneſs, or for ſubmiſſion, muſt be regard to God, who is the giver of every thing; who is perfectly good, and who has an infinite right to our obedience and ſubmiſſion. The higheſt reaſon that we can have for doing good is becauſe we are infinitely obliged to God, who requires it of us. But it is plain, that, where the reaſon is ſtrongeſt, and perceived to be ſo, there it is that the affection or goodneſs muſt be more ſtrong, and perfect, and ſincere. DISC. XIII.

This, I think, is what will deſerve to be conſidered, becauſe it ſhews us the greatneſs and nobleneſs of religion: that, where it is real, it is more perfect and more ſincere than any other principle. And this indeed appears plainly; either if we obſerve the ſentiments and actions of thoſe who really act upon a religious principle,

DISC. XIII. how ſtrong and truly affectionate they appear: or, if we obſerve what is more apparent, how ſlight and ſuperficial the favour or the affections are of thoſe, who act only from the common civility or decency of the world. It is true that even theſe are better than the profeſſions of religion, when it is not real; theſe being the moſt deceiving of all: but the reaſon is, becauſe, when it is real, it is the beſt principle of religion, and muſt be allowed to be the higheſt employment of the beſt affections in human nature. It muſt naturally then be the means of the trueſt happineſs and ſatisfaction. For, ſuch as our affections are, and according to the degree of them, if they are good, ſuch muſt our happineſs and enjoyment be. It muſt follow, therefore, that religion, when it is real, as it is the higheſt and trueſt virtue, ſo it is the happieſt life. But becauſe I think that this is often our opinion, even when we do not endeavour to obtain this happineſs, but content ourſelves with another kind and a lower degree, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew, that even in this

this reſpect, to preſerve any other kind of real happineſs, religion is the neceſſary means. DISC. XIII.

It is what we ſhould expect, that if religion is itſelf ſo high and noble a principle; if we are made capable of it, and it is indeed part of our nature; it cannot be then of no uſe, but muſt be the ruling principle that is neceſſary to keep our minds in due frame and order. As much as any one thing is made for another; as plainly as ſome creatures are made to be governed by the power of others, ſo plainly and naturally is man made, in his very affections and frame of mind, to require this love and fear of God according to his circumſtances and condition, as the due government, balance and perfection of his nature. It is evident that great proſperity, affluence, and eaſe, the greateſt worldly happineſs, cannot be borne without it. We may in ſuch circumſtances be the more apt to deſpiſe or neglect religion; but we come at laſt to ſee the need of it, to preſerve even the true enjoyment of that happineſs;

DISC. XIII. to keep our minds from being exalted or corrupted with it. It is unavoidably ſo, when there is not a due ſenſe of God's providence and goodneſs; by which only we proſper and are well. It is religion only, that would deſtroy ſo many follies and vanities in life, to which men are ſubject through want of it, and which it is of little effect to ſpeak againſt: but, when this takes place, they diſappear. On the other hand, ſince proſperity, health, and worldly joy and ſupport, cannot laſt always; ſince at leaſt ſickneſs, infirmity, and death will come; ſince human life, generally ſpeaking, is ſubject to ſo many misfortunes, and expoſed to ſo many evils, which we cannot by any foreſight or power prevent; and wanting ſo many comforts and bleſſings, which it is not in our power to procure; what remedy or ſupport can there be for men, but in religion; in our love of, ſubmiſſion to, and dependence upon, God? Here we ſee the value and importance of religion to us in *this* life. Man is made (as has often been obſerved) to know more miſeries than

other

other creatures; to feel them more, and to look forward, and to feel the anguish of them even before they come. With all this he aspires and languishes for happiness; he dreads death more, and he foresees another life beyond. What is there that can answer to this condition; to the nature of mankind, but religion only? God has made us subject to these miseries, and to these greater concerns than those of other creatures. In this he is just and good; for he has given us the knowledge of himself and the power of religion, which provides for all. If we neglect this, the natural remedy of all our ill, it is no wonder if we become, as is often seen, more miserable than the creatures below us. They have no vice or disorder; they feel less present ill, and perish without fear or concern. He, who has a lively and habitual sense of religion, has in that the remedy against all vice and disorder, all misery, dejection, and despair. It follows us at all times, and suits itself to all conditions; it gives strength to the weak, and moderation to the strong; it is

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DISC. XIII. the guide of our youth, and the ſupport and comfort of our old age; and, when it has led and preſerved us through this life, it gives us hope, and, with this, patience and reſignation in death.

This, therefore, for our own ſake, and, as it is of the greateſt conſequence to us in reſpect of the government of ourſelves and our happineſs, we are concerned to cultivate and improve. The means of doing it are firſt of all to conſult the natural notions that we have of God, and thoſe farther diſcoveries of himſelf, which he has given us in his word; to pray to him that he would ſhew us his goodneſs, and greatneſs, and power, and make us ſenſible of him, that we may adore and worſhip him in our hearts. If love is indeed the chief and beſt affection, we muſt pray that God would make us ſenſible of his goodneſs to ourſelves in particular, as well as to all the world, that we may love him for his goodneſs. With prayers to God, who muſt needs be the giver of goodneſs

goodneſs itſelf, as of other things, we muſt uſe our own endeavours to raiſe our thoughts and our affections to him. For which purpoſe, it is a neceſſary means to be moderate, and to govern ourſelves in the enjoyment of other things. The enjoyment of this world, and the love of its pleaſures or its advantages, cannot be reconciled with religion, if religion is a love of God, and of the pureſt and moſt perfect goodneſs. Theſe pleaſures were given, becauſe, in a juſt degree and order, they are of uſe in reſpect of the world; and, in another ſenſe, in reſpect of religion; becauſe a proper employment to virtue in governing and commanding them. It cannot be ſaid that in this reſpect religion is an hard ſervice, or God a ſevere maſter. But it will be found, that, as his ſervice will preſerve us from the miſeries of ſin and vice, ſo in itſelf, being the higheſt and nobleſt employment of all our affections, it is at the ſame time, by its nature, the means productive of the trueſt enjoyment and ſatisfaction. DISC. XIII.

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This I have endeavoured to shew in respect of this present life. And, if it appears, that religion is now the greatest happiness, it will be easily allowed, that, in respect of another life, it is *religion only* that can have hopes. If this is in some measure a natural expectation, it is likewise confirmed and made certain to us by God's own discovery and revelation, which it was worthy of him to make. So that with this the prospect and hopes of religion are perfect. It is in all respects our good; it has the promises and the best hopes of happiness in this life, as well as that which is to come.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE XIV.

THE WITNESS OF GOD IN FRUITFUL SEASONS.

ACTS XIV. 17.

Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.

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THIS is what the Apoſtles ſaid to the idolatrous people, who, having loſt the true worſhip and knowledge of God, had with this fallen into great ſins, of which the forgetfulneſs of God is the beginning: for, being itſelf the greateſt of all ſins, it is the cauſe of and leads to all others. They were going to worſhip the Apoſtles, becauſe they

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they had done a miracle in healing a lame man; ſo that they thought the gods were come down to them in the likeneſs of men. They brought oxen and garlands, and would have done ſacrifice to them, after the manner of their religion: which, "when the Apoſtles Barnabas and Paul heard of, "they rent their clothes, and ran in among the "people, crying out, Sirs! why do ye theſe "things? We alſo are men of like paſſions and "infirmities with you, and preach unto you that "ye ſhould turn from theſe vanities to (the true) "the living God, who made heaven and earth, "and the ſea, and all things that are therein: "who in times paſt ſuffered all nations to walk "in their own ways: nevertheleſs, he left not "himſelf without witneſs, in that he did good, "and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful "ſeaſons, filling our hearts with food and glad-"neſs. And with theſe ſayings ſcarce reſtrained "they the people that they had not done ſacri-"fice unto them."

It

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It will be uſeful to us to conſider theſe two things which are ſaid:

1ſt, That God left not himſelf without witneſs among the heathens, or the idolatrous nations, though he ſuffered them to forget him and to walk in their own ways.

2dly. That the witneſs of God was in this, that "he gave them rain from heaven, and fruitful "ſeaſons; filling their hearts with food and "gladneſs."

Firſt of all it is ſaid, that God left not himſelf without witneſs among the heathens or the idolatrous nations, whom he ſuffered to forget him, and to walk in their own ways. This is like what the Apoſtle ſays in another place; that "God "had made of one blood all nations of men, for "to dwell on the face of the earth; and had "determined the times before appointed, and the "bounds of their habitation, that they ſhould

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DISC. XIV. "seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after "him and find him; though he be not far from "every one of us. For in him we live, and "move, and have our being." It is implied, that God at all times gave men the means of knowing him. The creation and the outward works of God were these means: "for the invi-"sible things of God, by the creation of the "world, are clearly seen, being understood by "the things that are made; even his eternal "power and Godhead; so that they are without "excuse." But if God required or designed that the heathens should know him from his works, from his natural blessings; that they should be thankful, that they should worship, honour him, and serve him; how much more shall we think that he requires this now of Christians; who have his word, as well as his works; to whom he sent his Son from heaven, to call us to repentance, to teach us all our duty, to promise us his blessings, his presence and favour in this life, and eternal happiness with him hereafter? These things

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we have in the ſcripture: there we ſee God's great care of men: how that, after he had ſuffered this ignorance of men, and ſuffered them to go aſtray, and ſtill was kind to them, in all outward bleſſings and proſperity of this life, yet, in his due time, as the Apoſtle ſays, "he commanded all men every where to repent;" and warned them, that "he had appointed a day, in "which he would judge the world," by one perſon, who had lived upon earth, and of which "God had given aſſurance to all men, in that "he had raiſed him from the dead." (Acts 17. 32.) We are ſure that God does not neglect men; ſince he ſent his Son from heaven to teach us, and to require this repentance; to declare to us, firſt of all, pardon and forgiveneſs of all paſt ſins; to encourage us by the promiſe of his grace; and to ſet before us the hope of everlaſting life and happineſs with him hereafter: at the ſame time warning us of the great guilt of ſin and diſobedience, and the terrible puniſhment and wrath that will fall upon the wicked

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DISC. XIV. in another world; in that day, in which he will judge us for all our ſins, except what is forgiven by mercy and favour: if we continue in that mercy, and do not fall again by ſin into the ſame condemnation as others.

Chriſtians, therefore, have the greateſt incitements to ſerve God, from the hope of God's ſpirit and the promiſe of everlaſting life, and by the mercy and kindneſs of God in forgiving all our ſins, and the knowledge of our duty, that we have in the fulleſt and plaineſt manner in the ſcriptures; where our duty to God and to men is ſo plainly laid down: and yet the natural means of knowing God, and the natural reaſons for ſerving him, from his natural bleſſings, his goodneſs and kindneſs to us in this life, his preſervation of us continually; his ſending us "rain from "heaven and fruitful ſeaſons, filling our hearts "with food and gladneſs;" theſe are not forgotten; as indeed we muſt own ourſelves, that they are very conſiderable; ſince theſe are the bleſſings which

which oftentimes we too much value and desire; but yet cannot truly enjoy, if we have not a due sense of religion, a thankfulness, duty, and obedience to him who gives them. DISC. XIV.

2dly. I shall, therefore, now, in the second place, shew, how much we ought to serve God, as well as to be thankful to him for these his natural blessings; for fruitful seasons; for plenty, and health and life to enjoy it: since every one must know, that these are indeed God's blessings and his gifts, in whose hands all things are, and upon whom we and all the world depend continually.

God causeth his sun to shine upon the evil and upon the good; he sendeth rain upon the just and upon the unjust: he continues to do this, not that men should forget him, and live in their own way, as if all things would be still as well and the same; but by his goodness itself to bring us to repentance, to acknowledge him and to serve him:

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him: for ſo the Apoſtle teaches us, that God gives us theſe things, becauſe "he will not leave him-"ſelf without witneſs;" without the proofs of his power, goodneſs, and kindneſs to men. He gives theſe things not only that we ſhould enjoy them, but that we ſhould know him to be the giver of them: and ſurely kindneſs and goodneſs are the means which ought to bring us to love and to fear him; to fear to offend or to ſin againſt him, from whom every good thing comes. And that he ſends theſe things to us when we are undeſerving; that his ſun ſhines upon us though we are wicked; and that his bleſſings are not withheld for our undeſerving; this ought yet the more to move us and to draw us by the cords of men, by fair and gentle means, to love and fear him: for, in the order of this world, as well as by God's peculiar providence, all means are uſed to bring us to the acknowledgement of God and our duty. His goodneſs itſelf leads us to repentance: when this will not do; when we forget his bleſſings, or grow wanton in the uſe of them; then

then other means will be uſed; afflictions, poverty, DISC. XIV.
ſickneſs, are ſent to warn us, to puniſh us, and to bring our minds to think of him whom we forgot in our health and proſperity. So all things are ordered for the beſt, and tend to make us good. Our duty is to let nothing paſs without its due effect to make us better: to learn by afflictions, patience, ſubmiſſion, humility; by bleſſings and by proſperity, to learn to thank God from whom they come, and to enjoy them with due moderation; which we ſhall not forget to do, if we think of him who gave them, and that we depend upon him for our daily bread.

We cannot indeed enjoy any bleſſing or proſperity, till we are able to ſuffer afflictions or want; becauſe the greateſt bleſſing of all, the greateſt good to ourſelves, is a heart to thank for every thing, or to be ſubmiſſive, patient, and reſigned to God in every thing that happens to us in this life. In this ſtate we cannot be brought, but by the

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changes of his providence; by the evil as well as good: becauſe this is what breaks our wills, and is the means to make us patient and reſigned. It is ſubmiſſion and duty to God that will make us eaſy and happy in every thing; and therefore it is with this temper that we ought to enjoy God's bleſſings; receiving them from him, and uſing them cheerfully, but with thanks and acknowledgment to him. It was this ſtate of mind that made the Apoſtle ſay, that he was prepared for all things; "that he knew how to be abaſed, "and how to be exalted; how to abound, and "how to ſuffer want;" having a mind more diſpoſed to ſerve God than craving of worldly things. And ſo it is with us; that, if we would truly enjoy God's bleſſings, we muſt be good and thankful: for it is in that diſpoſition that men have the trueſt enjoyment and pleaſure: for we may ſee by experience, (and it cannot be too much obſerved) that the wicked, who have their hearts ſet upon worldly things, who are either needy of them, or know of nothing that is better,

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do not even enjoy theſe, nor have the ſatisfaction that good perſons have, while they receive God's bleſſings as his gifts, and uſe them with thankfulneſs and moderation. DISC. XIV.

So then this ought to be our knowledge, if we deſire to be as happy as we may be in this life; to know God firſt of all as the giver of every thing. To know that it is *him* we are born to ſerve; that we were not ſent into this world to enjoy his bleſſings as the beaſts, or the other creatures, who know not God; but to acknowledge him in every thing; to make his bleſſings the occaſions and means of our thankfulneſs; his afflictions the means of humility, contentment, and patience. It is ſo, by knowing God and ſerving him, we ſhall be moſt happy in this world: and the ſame duty to God, which will carry us eaſy through this life, will make us happy with him for ever. This is the great end which we may obtain by enjoying and uſing well the things of this preſent life. We may turn them to this account, as

DISC. XIV. the wise steward in the gospel, that, when all these things fail, when the afflictions and blessings of this world are at an end, we may be received into everlasting habitations.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE XV.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD A CALL TO HONOUR AND OBEY HIM IN OUR LIVES.

ROMANS i. 20, 21.

So that they are without excuse; because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful.

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THESE words of St. Paul are remarkable, and plainly shew us, how inexcusable we are, if, when we know God, we do not take care of our actions, and think to live with order and decency, as knowing God, in whose sight we are, and to whom we are accountable. And, what I shall endeavour to shew is, that indeed we all know him so far, that we are without excuse before

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God, and must be ſubjects of his diſpleaſure, if we do not honour him before men and in our hearts; if we do not permit, if we do not take care and endeavour that this knowledge have its due effects on our minds, and in our lives and actions.

The Apoſtle ſuppoſes that the heathens knew God, though they had no extraordinary call or revelation from him. And therefore he ſays, "the wrath of God is now by the goſpel re-"vealed from heaven againſt all ungodlineſs and "unrighteouſneſs of men, who hold the truth in "unrighteouſneſs; becauſe that which may be "known of God is manifeſt in them; for God "hath ſhewn it unto them." Where he ſeems to mean, that they have a knowledge of God in their hearts; or that this knowledge is ſo plain, that they cannot avoid having it: and there is another way by which this knowledge is con-firmed; "for the inviſible things of him, his "eternal

"eternal power and Godhead, are ſeen by the "things which he has made." DISC. XV.

The Apoſtle ſays this of the heathens; of thoſe, who had no revelation from God, nor any word from him; that they were inexcuſable, if they did not honour him as God, nor were thankful, becauſe they knew him. And he ſeems to ſay, that they knew him by two different means of knowledge: one, by having the notion of God natural to them and in their hearts; and then, by another means, agreeing with this, from the works of the Creator, in which the wiſdom, power and goodneſs of God are ſeen.

What I ſhall firſt endeavour to ſhew is, how plain, by our own reaſon, and the natural underſtanding of men, the knowledge of God is, ſo as to make us all inexcuſable, if we do not glorify or honour him in all our lives and actions: for, when we know him, we know that he is to be honoured and ſerved.

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Then afterwards I shall shew, that we have other means of knowing God, by his revelation and his word and call to us from heaven; that this knowledge requires still farther and more perfect obedience, and that we are without excuse, if we do not live according to it.

First of all, I shall appeal to every one's own heart, whether he does not know, or whether at least he does not conceive or think, that there is in this world a Being that is above him, and above all other things in this world which he sees, either men, or any thing else that is in the world. I say, whether he does not think that there is a Being above him, and above all those that he sees. It is natural for us to think that he is in heaven, *i. e.* that he is above, because he is most excellent. It is natural for men to look up to heaven for God, which could not be, if they did not already in their minds know him to be, and to be above us, the highest and most excellent Being. We see in this, that the most

natural

natural conception or thought that can ariſe in the minds of men is that of a powerful and perfect Being, who is infinitely above us. We do not know *how* excellent he is; but this we know, that he *is*, and that in all perfections, in every thing that is good or deſirable, he is the higheſt, and above all that we can conceive. It is not learning or books that teach us this; but it is what God himſelf teaches, or it is his gift within us; it is that which makes us different from all other creatures; that ſets us above the beaſts that periſh; it is our nature itſelf. We think that God is in heaven, and we look up to him, becauſe we think that he is above us in all reſpects, but we think at the ſame time that he is preſent every where; that he hears our prayers; that he ſees every thing we do. We think there is nothing that he cannot do; that he is able, in the greateſt difficulties or dangers, to deliver us. We think that he is merciful, wiſe, and good: that he is kind to thoſe that are good; to thoſe that ſerve and fear him; but that he will be juſt, and ſevere, DISC. XV.

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and terrible to those who offend him, or do wickedly. We think that he continues for ever; that, though we die and come to an end, "as a "tale that is told," yet he abides for ever; while the heaven and the earth changes, he is the same, and his years cannot fail. We think plainly, that, though every thing else is imperfect, yet he is not. We remove all imperfection from him. He is in our thoughts all-powerful, all-wise, all-good. We do not only conceive him to be better and more perfect than every thing else, but we conceive him to be the best, the highest and most perfect that is possible. We see a plain and certain difference between him and every thing else, that is in the world. If men are wise, or great, or powerful; how weak, how imperfect and ignorant do we think and know they are in respect of God? And how much do we despise or pity them, when they seem to have any power, any greatness like that of God; if they do not know that themselves depend upon God for their breath

breath and being; that whatever greatneſs they have, it is no more than he thinks fit to give? DISC. XV.

Theſe, I ſay, and ſuch as theſe are natural notions, which we have of God; and theſe are confirmed and ſhewn to us moſt plainly and viſibly in outward things; in the creation itſelf, or in the works of God; in which we ſee, or read, as it were, by means of this inward capacity which God gives, we ſee and read as it were, in his outward works, his divine power, wiſdom, and goodneſs; which are inviſible, as the Apoſtle ſays, which are not ſeen with our outward eyes, but are things within our mind, which God has made us capable to apprehend. If we had not theſe things within us, the world would be to us as a book, which we could not underſtand; or we ſhould underſtand it no more than the other creatures do, who ſee it, and yet have no apprehenſion of the wiſdom and power that made it and themſelves. But, when theſe things, the ſeeds and beginning of this knowledge are already

given,

Rom. XV. given, then in ourſelves, in every creature, in every the leaſt work of God, and ſtill more in all of them together, we ſee the marks of God's power, wiſdom, and goodneſs. There is nothing in the world, that is plainer than this; that it is God, who made it, or that every thing in the world, that is wiſely ordered and for good, is from him. It would not be to my purpoſe to ſpeak of theſe things farther than they are known. I do not endeavour to teach you, but to ſhew you that you know theſe things already ſufficiently; ſo that we ſhall all be without excuſe, if, knowing God, ſo far as would be ſufficient at leaſt, to increaſe and to improve our knowledge, we do not glorify him as God nor are thankful. I ſay to every one, that God has not left himſelf unknown, or without witneſs, in the greatneſs of his works which we ſee, in the whole world around us, or in the wiſdom with which every thing is done, which we ſee in the meaneſt plant or flower; or in the common bleſſings of this life, in that he ſends us rain from heaven

heaven and fruitful ſeaſons, filling our hearts with food and gladneſs. Does not every one know, that the bread, which he eats, is God's; that it is he, who makes his ſun to ſhine and his rain to fall upon the earth; and that it is he, who gives the fleece which clothes us? It was he, who made it, and who deſigned it to be more than the creature himſelf wants, that it might be for us the materials, from which we can make our clothing; his goodneſs and providence intending, at the ſame time, that this ſhould not be done, but by our own work; becauſe it is for our good to have employment: for which reaſon he does not give our bread, without our own care and induſtry; and yet it is not, and we cannot think it to be for this reaſon, the leſs his gift. I ſay theſe things are plain, and ſuch as we cannot be ignorant of, though we may and do forget them, and loſe the effect, which they ought to have, to make us acknowledge God as well as to know him. DISC. XV.

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The duties, which follow from this knowledge, are plain. It is impoſſible not to perceive, or not to underſtand them, if we do not fly from this knowledge and from the dictates of our own hearts. If God is infinitely great and powerful, and wiſe, and good, and juſt, it is evident that he ought to be honoured, and regarded, and obeyed, above all other things that are in the world: for his own excellence firſt of all; as we honour men according to any degree or ſhadow of worth or goodneſs, which appears in them. Whatever it is, it is but what God gives. There is nothing in this world, that can have any good, but what is from him. It is to him, therefore, that all honour is due, and all our affections, our love, fear, truſt, and obedience. If we will conſider our behaviour with any ſerioufneſs, we cannot but ſee how ſtrange and how unnatural it is, that we ſhould fear or love any thing, that we ſhould think ourſelves obliged to honour, or to ſerve, or to obey any perſon in this world, in preference to that God whom we are more bound

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to ſerve and to obey: and, at leaſt, that we ought to do nothing contrary to his will, from whom we receive every thing that we have, and "in whom "we live, and move, and have our being." DISC. XV.

But, beſides this, which is natural, we know that God hath ſhewn himſelf to men, and revealed himſelf to them from the beginning, taking them under his care, to teach and inſtruct them. He hath ſhewn us what obedience he requires; and, at the ſame time, hath made it plain throughout all his ſcripture, how imperfect and ſinful men are. He hath made it plain to us, that we are too unworthy, too ſinful in our nature, to be able to pleaſe him, who is of purer eyes than to behold what is ſinful without diſpleaſure. He, therefore, at laſt ſent his own Son into the world, not only to teach us our duty more perfectly; but, firſt of all, for this great end, that he might make ſatisfaction and atonement for the ſins of the whole world. And then, when our natures ſhall be renewed and ſtrengthened

DISC. XV. ened by his Spirit, to require a new and more perfect obedience, upon new and higher reasons; upon our being redeemed and created again to righteousness and goodness. This last great addition and improvement of our knowledge we cannot refuse; for it is what arises naturally from our condition as sinners. And, though it was above what we could expect, yet, now it is done, we see that it might reasonably and naturally have been expected from a just and merciful God. It is suitable to him to forgive sins in such a manner as should shew us with what difficulty sin is forgiven. It was suitable to him to humble us, to make us acknowledge all our sinfulness and our weakness, and to bring us to hope for favour, for assistance and support, only from his mercy, his goodness and strength.

Thus it is that we have new things, a new righteousness, new hopes of mercy and happiness. We must pray to him, not only to shew us, and

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to make us know the true religion which he has set before us, but to make us truly sensible of it; to give us a deep sense of him, who came into the world to make atonement and satisfaction for us; to be our Saviour, and leader into all holiness and godliness; to teach us to do every thing that is good, for his sake who loved us, and gave himself for us. DISC. XV.

These are the things, that are to be seriously, and with our humblest disposition, considered at all times. They are things, which we cannot avoid knowing. The gospel every where is read, and sounds them in our ears. We cannot resist the evidence of these things; as they have been proved by miracles and the power of God, manifestly attending those who taught us these great truths, and proving and confirming what they have said. I have thought it might be useful to speak chiefly of that first natural knowledge of God, which every man has by his reason and understanding, to shew that this is

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unavoidable, that we are without excuſe, if we do not follow this knowledge, and do what it requires; which is to worſhip, honour and obey him, who hath made himſelf known to us.

If we keep true to this light, which God has given to every man, we ſhall, by this law of God in our hearts, ſee how far we are from ſerving him and doing our duty as we ought. It will teach us to come before God, as our church directs, with humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient hearts; not truſting in our own righteouſneſs, but in his great mercies and in his name, whom God hath ſhewn and given to the world, that whoever will truſt in him and fly to him ſhall receive forgiveneſs, and ſhall have his ſtrength, his ſpirit, and his grace, to keep him from all ſin, and to prepare him, in this life, for that ſtate of happineſs and purity, to which we all hope to be admitted hereafter, through the atonement and interceſſion of our bleſſed Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.

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THE GOODNESS OF GOD.

PSALM CXLV. 9.

The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works.

THAT we may ſee reaſon to love God, and from this affection to pray to him, to truſt him with all our concerns, and to ſerve him willingly, and with deſire and ſatisfaction, (which is the ſervice that he moſt of all requires) I ſhall endeavour to ſhew the goodneſs of God, by whatever means it may beſt be ſhewn and made appear to us. And principally as it may be ſeen in his outward works, or in ſuch things, as are plain

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proofs of his goodneſs or kindneſs to us ourſelves or to other creatures.

It is certain, that the goodneſs of God appears to us farther by that diſcovery of our condition and of God's favour and mercy to us, which we ſee by the goſpel, or by God's own teaching and declaration to us. But upon this I ſhall not ſay much at preſent. I ſhall endeavour chiefly to ſhew the goodneſs of God, as it may be ſeen in his outward works, or in ſuch things as are the moſt plain proofs of his goodneſs and kindneſs either to us ourſelves (as men) or to other creatures.

And here, ſince the thing to be ſhewn is infinite goodneſs, the goodneſs of God, we muſt ſee at once it is a thing well worth our knowing and diſcovering. It is plain that it is this, which will make the things of this life more valuable, if we know they are the effects of infinite goodneſs; as kindneſs and goodneſs in every thing

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are more than the thing itſelf, which is the effect of it. For, if a friend does any thing for us, it is much better, than if we had the ſame benefit we know not how. And ſo the beſt and the moſt agreeable part in all outward things, and in every thing that God gives is this, if we can ſee him and his infinite goodneſs by them. DISC. XVI.

What are then thoſe outward things, by which we can ſee the goodneſs of God moſt plainly and evidently, by only ſuch reflection and conſideration as are in every one's power? We muſt not ſpeak at this time of what is particular to any; of any greater advantages, which ſome have; becauſe, though it lies upon thoſe who have theſe, to be thankful for them, yet the greateſt happineſs of life does not conſiſt in theſe, which are peculiar things; but in thoſe common bleſſings, which are poured out to all; ſo that all have the beſt and trueſt means of happineſs in their power; by which the goodneſs of God appears. The differences between men, if they

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are outward only, are ſuch as give but little real advantage, and often bring real and additional trouble to thoſe who have them. But men are diſtinguiſhed from all other creatures by moſt real bleſſings and advantages, and ſuch as ſhew the peculiar favour of God, and require peculiar thanks and ſervice from them. It will be natural for us to conſider theſe firſt; and then afterwards, ſince it is goodneſs itſelf which we deſire to ſee, it will be proper to obſerve that this is ſhewn to every creature in a due degree.

It is moſt plain, of all the creatures that we ſee in this world, who is the chief and the moſt highly favoured. It is man alone, that is made to look up, or to look round him, while other creatures are made to ſtoop and bend towards the earth. There are many conſiderable advantages from this form in reſpect of convenience and uſe; but the greateſt advantage of it really is this; that, agreeing with his other faculties, his mind and underſtanding, it fits him the more

to be a ſpectator of this world; to ſee the beauty, and order, and greatneſs of God's works. We ſee the ſun and ſtars above us; we can look round upon the earth, ſo as to ſee the general beauty and order of it; and with the ſame eye we can conſider and obſerve more cloſely the particular things that are near us. This is what belongs to every one in ſome meaſure. It is what every one is capable of: ſo that every one by his nature is made to be religious, or to acknowledge God in his works; if he does not by vice and ſin, and ſtupidneſs of his own contracting, loſe the privilege and benefit of his nature. For what is it that we ſee but order and beauty; which is the wiſdom and goodneſs of God expreſſed and manifeſted in his works? We ſee the ſun and its light, which itſelf awakens and refreſhes us. By this we ſee other things. We ſee the earth enlightened, covered with an univerſal green of woods or fields, and watered with rivers. We ſee other creatures around us, upon the earth, in the air, or in the waters; all made DISC. XVI.

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with infinite variety and beauty, and which all have their benefits, and are satisfied with the blessings that are given them. But is it for us that all these things are made? That the sun shines; that the earth is adorned with woods or flowers? And, if any thing rejoices or sings, is it to please us? It is, without doubt, in some measure: and we shall be ungrateful or insensible not to think so. It is, in some measure, ordered thus for our pleasure and satisfaction; and chiefly for this very end; that by these things we may see that there is an infinite and overflowing goodness, as well as wisdom and power, in the world. We may reasonably and justly think, that this is the greatest and the best end, if these things produce in us a sense and an acknowledgment of that power, wisdom, and goodness, with which they are made; of goodness in particular to us; if we acknowledge it merely as goodness, as without doubt it is. For this itself will humble us, and we shall learn not to forget God, and not to be exalted in ourselves by his

his benefits. But this is the effect only, when we do not conſider that they are his gifts, and the effects of his bounty and goodneſs to us. When God himſelf is conſidered as the author and giver, his goodneſs and even indulgence to us, which is ſeen in his providence, the greater it appears, the more it will humble us. For what can we admire more than goodneſs itſelf; or how can we think that any thing is our deſert, when even our very being itſelf, and that nature, which raiſes us above other creatures, is the effect of God's goodneſs only, and is his gift? But, ſince he has given us this nature, with this ſubmiſſion and dependence upon him, it is ours, and we are of more value, as our Saviour ſays, than many other creatures. And it is not pride, but juſtice, if we acknowledge this with due ſenſe of our dependence: and it is beſt, when we do not refuſe, but receive with gratitude, the benefits which he gives. But it is true, that other creatures have their bleſſings, and are conſidered by providence as well as we. DISC. XVI.

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It would be ignorant or ſelfiſh not to ſee this; and would hinder us from ſeeing God's goodneſs, which we want to ſee; and which we may know by our natural notions is beſt, when it is not confined to one, or to a few, but when it is infinitely extended, or as far as poſſible. We have reaſon to think there are other creatures in the world, and nearer to us than we imagine, much ſuperior, and in every reſpect better than men, though we do not ſee them. It is not likely that man is the higheſt creature, ſince there is more room between him and God, than there is between him and the loweſt creature in the world. And it is likely that it is all filled up with beings or creatures of greater perfections than men, and all of them in different degrees. Beſides theſe probable conjectures of reaſon, we are certainly aſſured by ſcripture, that there are ſpirits of different orders and degrees, which are angels, who live in heaven, or in other happier places than this earth: to whom we may hope hereafter to be joined, and who now may be near to us, though we do not ſee them. But

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we ſee below us other creatures in the air, upon the water, and upon the earth. Every part is full, and even the meaneſt creature has every thing in his make that is proper for him, and every thing that he wants provided for him. "God feedeth the young ravens," it is ſaid, "which call upon him. "He ſendeth the "ſprings into the rivers, which run among the "hills; all the beaſts of the field drink thereof, "and the wild aſſes quench their thirſt. Beſide "them ſhall the fowls of the air have their habi-"tation, and ſing among the branches. In the "high woods the birds make their neſts, and the "fir-trees are a dwelling for the ſtork." Theſe things I repeat to you from a Pſalm in ſcripture, (the 104th) which is altogether upon this ſubject, and which may help us to make the ſame obſervations upon what is before us, and to ſee the goodneſs of God that is ſpread around us, and his mercy over all his works. We ſee his goodneſs more indirectly in every thing, but in one thing we almoſt ſee it itſelf; in the affec-

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DISC. XVI. tion and care which every creature has for its young; and which is ſo ſtrong and ſo plain in the creatures which have not reaſon; who cannot ſee that it is their duty, nor learn it; but muſt have this in their nature, and given them, but from him who is the father of all his creatures and *the fountain of all goodneſs and affection.* The creatures could not be good or kind, if he, who made them, was not ſo: he muſt needs have in himſelf that kindneſs and affection, which he gives to his creatures. If we obſerve the works of God, if we conſider ourſelves, and the ſeveral creatures that are around us, we cannot want proofs of infinite goodneſs in the world. And for this reaſon I have obſerved, at this time, firſt of all, ſome advantages which men have in their make and their condition, and favours of providence plainly conferred upon us in this world. The greateſt of which is the ſenſe and knowledge which we have above other creatures. Then, after this, I have, in ſome few inſtances, ſhewn how the goodneſs of God is indeed ſpread in different

different degrees over all his works. It is not difficult for any one of us to see this in a great measure; if he will only observe the most common things, and the creatures that are around him, and which he sees continually, or in succession, so wisely made, so provided with what is necessary for them in their make first of all, and then in the other things without them which they want. They have all of them some advantage in their make that is particular to them; that degree of strength or skill, that is necessary to use that advantage; they have the food which they want provided for them. Who is it that gives the bee his skill, or the ant his foresight? Who is it teaches the bird, and every other creature, to take such care of its young in different ways? In all these things the goodness of God, as well as his wisdom and power, is seen plainly and evidently; it is before our eyes. It is goodness plainly, by which all these things are ordered; and it is as plain that it is *his* goodness, or no otherwise theirs, than as he gives it them. It is

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the ſame in the concerns of men: but in them as the goodneſs of God is greater in many reſpects, ſo are the inconveniences, and afflictions, and evils, greater than to other creatures. Of which it will not be difficult for us to ſee the reaſon.

As to the greater part of the evils that are among men, it is evident they ariſe from themſelves, and from the abuſe of thoſe greater powers and faculties which God has given them. By their nature they are capable of greater evil, as well as greater good: and, therefore, on this account we have no reaſon to complain, if there are evils in the life of men, ſuch as pains, ſickneſs, and diſappointments, which might have been prevented, or ordered otherwiſe, if God had pleaſed; yet this is no argument, that God is not good, or not good to us. But we muſt conſider what the condition of man is by ſin; and that indeed we are not in that ſtate which firſt of all was intended for us; that the evils, which we have, are ſuitable to this condition; that they are

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intended to have their beſt effect, if they teach us to look for a better life, which has been promiſed and declared to us. We have been told from heaven in the cleareſt manner, that there is another world, where the goodneſs of God is ſhewn much more; where goodneſs and happineſs dwell together; in which we ſhall have our part, if we deſire it. And this is that, which will anſwer all objections, and muſt ſatisfy us that the goodneſs of God is not the leſs, becauſe there are evils in this life: but his goodneſs is reſtrained at preſent, by the condition in which we are, and in which his entire goodneſs cannot be ſhewn. But this preſent world, even as it is, is full of God's goodneſs. It appears to us in innumerable inſtances, more plainly than any words can ſpeak. We ſee it in the things themſelves, in the benefits which he gives, which muſt be from his goodneſs. We ſee it in the affections which his creatures have, by which they are concerned and take care for others; which can only be from him; and all theſe things which are the moſt common, DISC. XVI.

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common, the wise and good order of things, which we see in the works of God, deserve to be considered by us, that we may see the goodness from which they proceed. This will be of great use to us; and it is what every one is capable of, who will consider.

I have only observed some things, to which every one must add more. And I pray to God for his grace to affect our minds with a proper consideration of these truths. Let us be thankful to God, the fountain of all goodness; and, as we increase in piety towards him, may the proper fruits be shewn in all charity and kindness to our fellow-creatures, and in our own living sober and good lives.

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THE DIVINE MERCY THE PROPER MOTIVE TO CHARITY.

EPHES. IV. 31, 32.

Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you.

IT muſt always be underſtood, that the great end propoſed by the goſpel is not merely any happineſs in this world, but a deliverance from miſery, and the attainment of happineſs much greater

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greater than any concerns of this preſent life. This is indeed plain in the goſpel; and it is what every Chriſtian ſhould acknowledge, that it is his hope, and his inſtruction in the way to happineſs and ſalvation with God, in another life. It is in this, indeed, that the greatneſs of the goſpel conſiſts; by this it has all its power and influence to move us to whatever is beſt for ourſelves, and moſt conducive to the happineſs and good order of this preſent world. It muſt neceſſarily have the greateſt effect towards the preſent happineſs and good order of the world, if it is at the ſame time underſtood and acknowledged, that the goſpel, which ſets before us infinite happineſs or miſery, does indeed uſe all the weight and power of theſe motives, to require whatever is moſt our duty to the world. And this is ſo plain, that no miſtake can ever ariſe in thoſe who read the goſpel and learn their religion from it. The goſpel, when it requires our duty, deſcends even to particulars, and as a ſerious and earneſt thing, and not a doctrine of idle or empty knowledge: it

it ſpeaks expreſsly of the duties of governors and ſubjects, of parents and children, of maſters and ſervants: it requires as particularly as poſſible every duty that is ſuitable and tends moſt to the good order of this world. You ſee theſe duties required with the greateſt plainneſs, and therefore with the greateſt ſtrength, in all the writings of the New Teſtament. They are generally in the end of the Epiſtles; as the uſe which is made of that mercy of God, and the ſalvation which is taught in them, as the principle from which they ſhould proceed. We cannot with any reaton think that this ſhould be otherwiſe, or that any revelation from God ſhould not teach us and require every duty of this life. It is impoſſible that any doctrine from God ſhould any way interfere or be inconſiſtent with our juſt concerns or true intereſt in the preſent world in which we are. We muſt think that, if the order or happineſs of this world is of any value in itſelf, it would be promoted and not hindered by any doctrine that comes from God: DISC. XVII.

Disc. XVII. or, if the good and happineſs of this world be nothing (as it is nothing, when compared with that which is the true hope and great end of the goſpel) yet, while we live in the world, how can we ſhew any duty to God ſo well as in our behaviour in reſpect of this world? How can we ſhew our belief of that mercy which is in the goſpel, or the love of God, which it is intended to produce, but by juſtice, kindneſs, and induſtrious charity towards men?

The goſpel of Chriſt upon its firſt publication, and as declared by angels, was "Glory to God "in the higheſt, good-will towards men." As God has thus affectionately and ſolemnly declared his good-will to us all, how can we anſwer it to ourſelves, to be defective in this reſpect to one another? Or, as the ſcripture itſelf argues, in another place, "if you love not your brother, "whom you have ſeen, how can you love God, "whom you have not ſeen?"

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It is, however, neceſſary, that our duty to men and to the world ſhould be done on *Chriſtian principles*, and from that faith, without which nothing can be acceptable to God. Therefore theſe principles cannot be improper to be conſidered; and eſpecially if they are the moſt powerful as well as the beſt to produce ſuch a diſpoſition towards one another, as is at all times neceſſary to ſocial happineſs.

In order to enforce this from ſuch reaſons as are moſt proper to uſe, I ſhall ſhew, 1ſt. What that principle or reaſon is which the Apoſtle uſes (in my text) to perſuade the Epheſians to put away all bitterneſs and wrath, and to be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another; *i. e.* to put on ſuch diſpoſitions and affections, as every one muſt know are at all times neceſſary to the good of any ſociety of men.

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2dly. I ſhall afterwards ſhew that, as this is indeed the Chriſtian principle, ſo it is beyond all others the ſtrongeſt to produce obedience to theſe commands and to any other duty that is required of us.

The principle or argument which the Apoſtle uſes is, indeed, ſuch an one as is peculiar to Chriſtianity, and can be known only to ſuch as do truly believe and receive the goſpel. I ſet it before you to be conſidered, and yet ſuppoſe it to be underſtood, as what you often hear. It is indeed the principle upon which every where in ſcripture the greateſt ſtreſs is laid. As Chriſtians, we all know from what miſery, and to what hope he, who is our Saviour, hath raiſed us, and he alone, by what he did and ſuffered for us. Our condition with God is not ſuch as men, who are both without the fear of God, and without hope from him, conceive. We are not born into the world like the brutes, who are under no law but that of their nature, by which they are directed,

directed, and have no conſcience of their own, no judgment or knowledge of what is good or ill. We are under a law of God, of which every man knows more than he performs. This law of God, whether written in a book, as the ſcripture is, or elſe in our hearts and conſciences, is the ſame. This law of God is perfect and infinite as God is himſelf; though it may all be comprehended, as our Saviour has taught us, in two great commandments, of which the firſt is, "thou ſhalt "love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and "with all thy mind, and with all thy ſoul, and with "all thy ſtrength: and the ſecond, thou ſhalt love "thy neighbour as thyſelf." This law of God is ſpiritual, like God himſelf: it ſearches the heart and reins. "It is ſharper than a two-edged ſword, "piercing even to the dividing aſunder of ſoul and "ſpirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a "diſcerner of the thoughts and intentions of the "heart." He, that hates his brother, or ſpeaks bitterly of him, is a murderer: he, who does not commit the outward act, but allows himſelf

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in the desire of what is criminal, is an adulterer already in his heart: he, who receives any unjust or unreasonable gain, steals; he, who does in any respect what he would not that another should do to him, commits violence and injustice, and sins against this reasonable and righteous law of God. This cannot be thought too strict; for it is in this manner our mild, and gracious, and merciful Saviour himself explains the law, as you may see in the fifth and sixth chapters of St. Matthew, where he speaks of this law. And who is there among men, that can be justified by such a law as this? What shall we think of what our Saviour himself tells us in the same place; "that heaven and earth shall pass away "sooner than one jot or one tittle of that law," even as he explains it, "shall pass away" without being fulfilled? Who has at *all* times fulfilled this law; or who can think that he has loved God "with all his heart, and with all his mind, and "with all his strength; or his neighbour as "himself?" Such love to God or men no man performs

performs we muſt confeſs. Our own advantage, our own pleaſure or intereſt, is nearer to our hearts. Thus every mouth is ſtopped: and, by this law of God, which we are under, no fleſh can be acquitted before him. And what reaſon can we give that judgment ſhould not be executed; that we ſhould not be condemned to ſuch puniſhment, as the infinite juſtice and purity of God require to be inflicted upon us? For God's juſtice and his hatred againſt ſin are infinite; and, when he gives a law, he cannot but be earneſt in giving it, and require that it ſhould be obſerved. DISC. XVII.

In this our miſery the Son of God himſelf came down from heaven to be our Saviour. He undertook to fulfil this law, which muſt be fulfilled; and more than this, when innocent and without ſin, to ſuffer for us, that what he did and ſuffered might be an atonement for our ſins. This is the joy, the light, and the mercy of the goſpel. By grace or favour we are ſaved, when

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"the kindneſs and love of God towards man "appeared; not by works of righteouſneſs which "we have done, but, according to his mercy, "he ſaved us: that, being juſtified by grace, we "ſhould be heirs of eternal life." This is what the ſcripture ſays always, that "Chriſt is our "Saviour," that "there is no other name under "heaven given unto men, by whom we may be "ſaved." And, as it is in my text, that "God "hath forgiven us for his ſake," it is by mercy, without doubt, and not for our own righteouſneſs, that we can expect forgiveneſs of ſin, or have the hope of heaven that is promiſed us: for our righteouſneſs cannot deſerve any thing with God. But this mercy was intended to bring us to greater righteouſneſs, to a love of God, and to all duty towards men, and is, as I ſhall now ſhew,

2dly. The proper and moſt powerful motive eſpecially to all love, kindneſs, forbearance, and forgiveneſs of one another; which are the diſpoſitions

ſitions and affections that are at all times proper to be recommended to Chriſtians. DISC. XVII.

It is my duty then to recommend kindneſs, charity, and forgiveneſs, as the common good and happineſs of all; and, in recommending them, I would ſpeak from other reaſons, if I did not think this itſelf the moſt proper to Chriſtians, and more weighty and powerful than any other that can be uſed. Men, who do not know, nor acknowledge, the mercy which they receive from God, which is the goſpel itſelf; (for that is the glad tidings of mercy and forgiveneſs to thoſe who repent) they well be implacable, unmerciful, malicious, exacting and ſevere. They, who are without religion, and without the fear of God, are at the ſame time without hope from him; they, being without repentance, can never have any knowledge of his mercy or forgiveneſs. But a Chriſtian is one, who hopes for favour and acceptance with God only from mercy, and by a Saviour for whoſe ſake he is forgiven. He is taught

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taught agreeably to this ſalvation which he receives, to pray for forgiveneſs of his own treſpaſſes, "as he forgives them that treſpaſs againſt him." When he acknowledges that he is himſelf ſaved and redeemed by mercy, he cannot be cruel or unkind. He muſt have the ſtrongeſt motive within him to ſhew and to pour out upon others the love and kindneſs which he has received himſelf. He cannot be ſevere to mark what is done amiſs, when he knows, that, by the law of juſtice, he was himſelf condemned and ſtood a ſinner before God. If he conſiders the greatneſs of this mercy, and the ſalvation which he receives, it is impoſſible he ſhould want any other motive either to bear injury from others, or to ſhew kindneſs and charity to them. The whole world, if it was offered to him, cannot oblige him more than he is obliged already. He will do this even without thinking that he does any thing more than what is due from him. It is then only that he can think he would be allowed to hate or to revenge, if any man could do him an injury

that

that was greater than the mercy and love which Christ hath shewn him. DISC. XVII.

I would not have it understood from this, that Christians are not allowed to do themselves justice, and bring to punishment those, who cannot be moved by other means. It is necessary this should be done for the good and order of the world. He, that is a Christian, is in a double state; he is a member of the kingdom of God, and he is at the same time a subject or member of the kingdom of this world. In the kingdom or state of this world, justice, punishment, severity are often necessary for the good order of it; but in the kingdom of God, or as we are Christians, no injury is great; there is nothing but what may, and ought to be, forgiven. Pride, rigour, and severe justice, it may be said at all times were not made for man, but less for a Christian; because it is by mercy he stands, and is brought within the kingdom of God, into his favour and acceptance. And our being Christians must at

all

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all times be ſo far regarded then, when our own preſervation, or the good and order of ſociety requires that the injury ſhould be oppoſed or puniſhed; yet puniſhment and any ſeverity muſt be uſed for thoſe ends only, with charity and love of their perſons, and readineſs to obtain the ſame ends, if it may be done by other means.

All this our Saviour hath taught us in the cleareſt manner in a parable, in which he teaches his diſciples before hand the condition, nature, and obligation of the kingdom of God; particularly in reſpect of mercy and forgiveneſs. It is when St. Peter comes to him and aſks him, how often his brother ſhould ſin againſt him and he forgive him:—"till ſeven times?" He thought that would be enough; for he did not fully know at that time the true reaſon that obliges a Chriſtian to forgiveneſs. He did not know in the death of Chriſt the forgiveneſs or the mercy of it. Our Saviour therefore does not rebuke him, but tells him, he ſhould forgive "not till ſeven

"times

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"times only, but till ſeventy times ſeven:" becauſe, as it plainly follows, a new reaſon ſhould be given, which would require him and enable him to do it. Therefore, ſays he, as in this reſpect it teaches and requires the utmoſt mercy and kindneſs, "is the kingdom of heaven like-"ned unto a certain king, which would take an "account of his ſervants. And, when he began "to reckon, one was brought unto him, which "owed him ten thouſand talents; and, becauſe "he had not to pay, his Lord commanded him "to be ſold, and his wife and children, and all "that he had, and payment to be made. But, "when the ſervant fell down, and beſought him," and promiſed indeed to pay him all, he accepted of nothing but his prayer, and "forgave him the "whole debt." This is exactly the caſe of every Chriſtian: God forgives us freely upon our repentance; and accepts of no payment of his debt from us. It is impoſſible that we ſhould make any atonement of ourſelves. We may remark farther, that this ſervant, thus forgiven, is not

commanded

DISC. XVII. commanded even to ſhew mercy to others, though we find it was ſo ſtrictly required of him; becauſe it was thought he could not do otherwiſe having been forgiven the whole debt himſelf: and therefore it is ſaid, when that ſervant went out, immediately from being forgiven himſelf, and finding one of his fellow-ſervants, that owed him an hundred pence, "he took him by the throat, and de-"manded what he owed; and, not moved by his "entreaty, put him into priſon, till he ſhould "pay the debt. Then his Lord was wroth, and "called him, and ſaid unto him, thou wicked "ſervant, I forgave thee all that (great) debt "becauſe thou deſiredſt me. Oughteſt not thou "alſo to have had compaſſion on thy fellow-"ſervant, even as I had pity upon thee? And "his Lord was wroth, and delivered him to the "tormentors, till he ſhould pay all that was due "unto him: and ſo likewiſe," ſays our Saviour, "ſhall your heavenly Father do unto you, if you "from your hearts forgive not every one his "brother their treſpaſſes."

This

This ſimple and beautiful parable teaches kindneſs, mercy, and forgiveneſs, upon the ſtrongeſt and moſt affecting principle. Agreeably to the ſame, the words of my text require us "to be "tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as "God, for Chriſt's ſake, has forgiven us." And in this diſpoſition we ought certainly to live; full of thankfulneſs to God for his great mercy to us, and with kind and charitable diſpoſitions one towards another. This moſt delightful temper of mind is chiefly required of us, becauſe it prepares and fits us for the realms of peace and love, to which we hope to be admitted hereafter. It has alſo the moſt bleſſed effects upon this earth which we now inhabit. So gracious and reaſonable is the goſpel of Chriſt, that the ſame temper and diſpoſitions, which promote the good of communities, tend to the eaſe, enjoyment, and ſatisfaction of every individual: and the very ſame tempers of mind and meaſures of acting, that tend moſt to private and to public good are

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those which God himself hath made our duty, and which he enjoins most strictly in that religion which he hath sent from heaven.

DISCOURSE

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THE MEASURE AND REWARD OF BENEFICENCE.

LUKE VI. 36, 37, 38.

Be ye, therefore, merciful, as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged. Condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned. Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven. Give, and it shall be given unto you: good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom: for, with the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again.

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IT is probable from many of the circumstances, that the discourse of our Saviour in this chapter,

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which is from the 20th verſe to the end, is the ſame with that which St. Matthew has given much more at large in his 5th, 6th, and 7th chapters. This, therefore, in St. Luke, is imperfect, or not the whole. He gave us probably what either himſelf had remembered, or what he had heard from others; while the wiſdom and goodneſs of God took care that we ſhould have what is right or what is ſufficient; at leaſt, when it is compared with, and made up, by what is more full and large in another Evangeliſt: for even that which is more full and large, it is poſſible, might not be the whole of that our Saviour himſelf ſaid. There might poſſibly be ſomething more at that time, as in the whole hiſtory it cannot be expected that we ſhould have all that he ſaid and did; or that every word he ſaid, or every action he did, ſhould be recorded. But we have in the whole ſo much as is ſufficient: ſo that, by due conſideration and attention, and by comparing all together, and by explaining one part with another, we may have a full and ſufficient inſtruction; which, it was wiſely ordered, that it ſhould require ſome pains

to

to collect. Because by this attention itself, and by consideration, the things will sink more into our memory, and be the better understood. Now in this discourse, as it is in St. Luke, the chief part and almost all that he has retained are the precepts concerning kindness and goodness towards men, or, as we may justly ourselves consider, concerning our duty to God, in what measure these things should be, or indeed this, that we ought not to measure and limit nicely our duties either towards God, or towards men, that we should not be afraid of doing too much: for, "if ye do good to them, that do good to you, "if ye lend to them, of whom ye hope to receive, "what thanks have you? For sinners also lend "to sinners, to receive as much again. But love "you your enemies, and do good, and lend, "hoping for nothing again; and your reward "shall be great, and ye shall be the children of "the highest; for he is kind to the unthankful, "and to the evil." Then follow the words of my text; "Be ye, therefore, merciful, as your

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"Father is merciful;" i. e. not in a common measure: "judge not, and ye shall not be judged; "condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned; "forgive, and ye shall be forgiven; give, and "it shall be given unto you: good measure, "pressed down, and shaken together, and run- "ning over, shall men give into your bosom: for, "with the same measure that ye mete withal, it "shall be measured unto you again."

It is plainly the design of our Saviour, that we should be kind, and merciful, and forgiving, in the greatest degree, and even to the undeserving: as he says, that "so shall ye be the children of "your father; for he maketh his sun to rise upon "the evil and upon the good, and sendeth rain "upon the just and the unjust." That is, as far as is consistent with his justice and his providence, he gives the common blessings of this life equally, and with very little distinction: or, if he shews his justice now by any remarkable punishment, (and certainly he will hereafter at his proper time) yet

yet mercy and kindneſs become *us*, who are ourſelves under the ſame condemnation, if he ſhould deal ſtrictly with us. Theſe are reaſons drawn from our own condition, our own ſtate in reſpect of God, as ſinners ourſelves, as of the ſame nature with the moſt ſinful; that we ſhould ſhew favour and mercy: as there are other reaſons drawn from our condition too, from our weakneſs, or our inability, that we ſhould make ſome diſtinctions, and put ſome limitations even to our good deſigns. For it is not in the power of the greateſt to give or to be bountiful to all alike, or to every one. It is not ſafe for us to cheriſh enemies, or to truſt ourſelves to them: we cannot be bountiful or kind to all, and at the ſame time out of the reach of harm, as he is, *who maketh his ſun to ſhine upon a whole world, and his rain fall on all countries, enriching all alike.* Our power is ſhort and limited, and our own condition is weak and to be guarded; and it is not intended that we ſhould be without theſe conſiderations. But the precepts of our Saviour lean in general

SERM. XVIII. to the ſide of goodneſs, mercy, and kindneſs. And yet this is not without care to prevent exceſs. And there is beſides not only his wiſdom and his ſpirit, which can ſafely judge of the rules, how far they are to be complied with on any particular occaſion; that wiſdom, which judges from all his rules what is beſt, what is moſt for the honour of God and our religion: for it may be for his honour, that we ſhould, on ſome occaſions, reſiſt evil with calmneſs and ſteadineſs; that we ſhould refuſe, and repel, and diſcourage the unworthy. Theſe are indeed direct and ſtrong precepts, which require this; ſuch as when he ſays to his diſciples, "Behold, I ſend you forth "as ſheep among wolves; be ye, therefore, wiſe "as ſerpents, and harmleſs as doves." And when he tells them "to beware of men," and not to truſt them; for "they would deliver them unto "councils and would betray them:" for, though there is ſome goodneſs in the world, yet the world itſelf is bad: and to this purpoſe is that precept in St. Matthew, which follows immediately

ately after the precept not to judge, but comes after all his other precepts of mercy and indulgence, and was intended to be applied to all; "Give not that which is holy to the dogs, nor "caſt ye your pearls before ſwine; leſt they "trample them under their feet, and turn again "and rend you." For the meaning of this is, though I have ſaid you muſt not judge too ſtrictly, but be favourable ("for with what judgment ye "judge, ye ſhall be judged") you cannot yourſelves ſtand ſuch a ſevere examination before God, nor even before men: and it is unreaſonable, that you ſhould judge ſeverely, who have the ſame or as great faults yourſelves: although I have ſaid to you before, that you ſhould "give to every "one that aſketh, and be kind to the thankleſs "and undeſerving," as God gives the common bleſſings of this life without diſtinction; yet I would not have you think that thoſe precepts exclude diſcretion, or that they are not to be judged in the particular practice by a wiſdom and diſcretion that I will give you. You ſhall be DISC. XVIII.

good

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good, and kind, and merciful; but it is not intended that you ſhould not know the value of every thing and your own, or that you ſhould give yourſelves as a prey to the unworthy. Therefore throw not that which is holy to the dogs. Think not that all alike deſerve your kindneſs or your confidence. Your doctrine and yourſelves will be too valuable to be truſted to every one; and every thing, that you might give to others, has its value, and is a ſerious thing in your uſe of it, and not to be thrown away; nor your pearls to be given to thoſe, who know not how to value them nor to uſe them; who ſhould be treated with ſomething that they know better and underſtand: for, if you give them too much, or what is not proper for them, the effect will be, they will turn upon you and rend you.

This is our Saviour's doctrine; and theſe precepts, you may underſtand plainly, are intended to teach caution, prudence, and diſcretion, and much better and more perfect than worldly perſons

sons have: because it will proceed from better reasons; for from the same duty, the same resolution to do only what is best, we shall either be favourable or strict, we shall be open or reserved, we shall give or we shall refrain from giving. Practice and experience will make us more perfect; but it is plain that the precepts of our religion require caution and consideration, and not kindness or charity without consideration. DISC. XVIII.

I have observed this, because it may prevent objections to the doctrine of the gospel, as if it required too much on one side, and would be inconsistent with the necessary care and prudence of this world; and because this caution is omitted by St. Luke. He gives the precepts of being merciful, and of not judging, only, and without the caution; and those precepts are all that he has preserved. What I intended to consider was chiefly this, as our Saviour has promised so much reward to goodness and mercy, and has expressed this so fully—"good measure, pressed down, and shaken

"together,

DISC. XVIII. "together, and running over, ſhall men give "into your boſom." What I intended to conſider was this:—From whence is this reward to be expected? Is it from men or only from God? For it is ſaid in our tranſlation, "that men ſhall "give us meaſure that is preſſed down, and "ſhaken together, and overflowing." And it is probable that our Saviour directs us generally to expect this return from men; that we ſhall find with them the ſame favour that we ſhew; and he ſhall be judged by men without mercy, that will ſhew no mercy: for there is a juſtice among men; and not only on the ſevere ſide, but they will often be kind to thoſe who ſhew kindneſs to them. And it was the deſign of our Saviour to teach us, not that all is bad, but that there is a degree of juſtice and goodneſs even in men. He teaches us abſolutely, that there is a degree of juſtice and goodneſs among men, that we may expect what is more perfect and more to be depended upon from God.

But

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But though our Saviour does not exclude men from being our judges and rewarders in ſome reſpects; yet it is from God we are chiefly to expect that bountiful and gracious retribution, which will be to the full and overflowing for every thing we can do. With him we are ſure that nothing will be loſt. He will not only keep a ſtrict and exact account, and ſet all our ſins before us, and conſider and weigh them; but every act of goodneſs, of mercy, of forbearance, he will repay us to the full, and with great abundance over. He is inclined to that ſide; for mercy prevaileth againſt, or over, judgment. It is to be obſerved beſides, that in the words of the Evangeliſt, it is not ſaid that men ſhall give us ſuch reward, but in general they ſhall give us, or there ſhall be ſome, who will give us; by which it is undetermined whether it is from God or men, and we may reaſonably expect from both: for ſo it is right to expect well of men, directed by God's providence and power: but it is God's reward and retribution that will be both certain

and

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and overflowing; for all his rewards are ſo. When he approves of us, he does not meaſure out his favours. But it is according to his own greatneſs that he rewards or gives. He gives *heaven* for a reward! In what meaſure or what proportion is this to any thing we can do or deſerve? This is that *overflowing* meaſure which our Saviour means. What ſuffering can we think too great; what bounty, goodneſs, or kindneſs to others, can we think too much, if it is to be *ſo* rewarded; if every ſecret act of goodneſs, of mercy, or forbearance, ſhall be remembered? It is with that mercy, which we ſhew to others, we ſhall ourſelves be treated; but with mercy and favour infinitely greater than it is in our power to ſhew.

From other of our Saviour's precepts, which are of the ſame force as theſe, which teach us to be kind or merciful, we learn to uſe diſcretion, to make diſtinctions. For he hath taught us not to throw that which is holy to the dogs; and

bread

bread itſelf, and every the leaſt good thing of this life, we know is holy in this ſenſe, that it is not to be thrown away; nor is the leaſt thing to be given, nor any thing indeed to be done without diſcretion and good reaſon. DISC. XVIII.

If we obſerve theſe, which are our Saviour's own directions, and learn that wiſdom or prudence, which he will teach us, which will be even more exact than any wiſdom or prudence of the world; then, I ſay, if our own compaſſion or kindneſs, or if the precepts and goodneſs of the goſpel ſhould require us to bear with any injuſtice or injury, to give up any advantage, to part with any thing, that will do others more good, than it does to us who do not want it; if, in ſuch things as theſe, we deny ourſelves, we ſhould not think that we are loſers, or that we do ourſelves any injury: we ſhould conſider that by theſe hardſhips, which by choice and with diſcretion, or ſome good reaſon upon the occaſion, we lay upon ourſelves, we gain firſt of all

DISC. XVIII. all the pleasure and the satisfaction of doing right; of doing that which our God and our Saviour has required us to do; for he hath taught and required us "to be merciful, as our Father which "is in heaven is merciful." We gain besides a reward in God's measure, which is "pressed "down, and shaken together, and running over." He hath promised heaven and an everlasting happiness for these sufferings, these self-denials, and these great hardships which he requires of us. He does not always require them as his due; he does not always say, you owe to me already yourselves, and all that it is possible for you to do; for it is from me that you have your being itself, and every thing that you have is mine. It was he also, who redeemed us; who recovered us, and brought us into the hopes of his favour and mercy, when we were lost. He does not claim our service only for what is past, and what we have already received; but he promises still farther continual and everlasting happiness and reward.

reward. So that it is indeed an overflowing measure with which God deals to us. DISC. XVIII.

Upon the whole, we ſhould conſider, that it is to *God* that all our *duty* is. It is *him* we are to ſerve and to ſubmit ourſelves to. Whatever, therefore, we may be called upon to do, whatever it is that we are to ſuffer, if he requires it, we have no right to complain or murmur. All the duties of our religion ſhould be performed willingly, as a ſervant ought to do. For the utmoſt is our duty, for what God has already done, and his rewards beſides are infinite: he does not meaſure or conſider what our ſervice is worth. "Good "meaſure, preſſed down, and ſhaken together, "and running over, he will pour into our bo-"ſoms."

DISCOURSE XIX.

THE CREATION OF MAN IN THE IMAGE OF GOD.

GENESIS i. 26, 27.

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

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I Shall not endeavour, at this time, to shew very particularly in *what* that image of God consisted,

conſiſted, in which it is ſaid that man was created. We ſee that in the New Teſtament (in the 4th chapter of St. Paul's Epiſtle to the Epheſians, and at the 24th verſe) it is explained of a likeneſs to God in righteouſneſs and true holineſs; which, therefore, we know is loſt; ſince men have not now naturally the power to obtain this: but, though they have within them the law or rule, by which they know what is good or ill, yet how to perform this they know not: they have not now naturally a ſpirit or power equal to that rule, or to that underſtanding of good or ill, of right and wrong, which they have: from having which and not being able to loſe it, nor yet in all things to live according to it, ariſes both the guilt and miſery of men in their preſent condition. But ſtill men have that law and rule; the ſenſe and underſtanding of what is good or ill, of what is right or wrong. This is that by which men differ from other creatures. It is part of that image in which man was created; by which we ſee ſtill his nobleneſs above other creatures, and for the

ſake of which he is ſtill of ſo much value in the ſight of God.

Of what great value he was in the ſight of God at firſt we ſee plainly even from the manner in which it is ſaid that God created him. It was after other things were made; and it is repreſented as if God took counſel with himſelf, when he made man; and it is ſaid, that he made him in his own image, different from other creatures, with a power to govern them. The male and female were both made in this image. But the man was made firſt, and the woman afterwards, to ſhew their mutual connection, and the dependence they have one upon the other. What care God took of this his creature we ſee by his condeſcending to appear to, and to converſe with the man in ſo gracious a manner, as when he brought the beaſts before him, to ſee what he would ſay of his work; and when the man ſaw nothing there that could be a proper equal or companion for himſelf; then, when he ſaw his want,

want, creating the woman for him, of the ſame real nature with himſelf, with the ſame reaſon, the ſame ſenſe of good and ill, of right and wrong. He placed them both in Paradiſe, he appeared preſent and he converſed with them. DISC. XIX.

It is indeed true, and we ought to think that all theſe things ſhew the moſt gracious goodneſs and condeſcenſion of God. For indeed it muſt be the higheſt condeſcenſion, whatever favour God pleaſes to ſhew to any of his creatures. But, at the ſame time, it ſhews plainly, and we are allowed to think, that it ſhews to us, ſome value in that creature, which God himſelf had given to it, and which he thought proper to take ſo much notice of.

But this, we may object, was at the time when man was innocent, and had preſerved as yet that image of God, and perfection of his nature, in which he was made. We may ſay, that this does not concern us; that we are not now ſuch crea-

PART. XIX. tures; we cannot think ourſelves now ſo deſerving of the regard or favour of God. And, as we have reaſon ſufficient to think this, from this we go farther, to think that God will take no notice of us at all; that we are not worthy to be regarded by him in any ſenſe; that he will neither puniſh nor reward; and that for ourſelves it is of no conſequence what ſuch creatures as we do, or what becomes of us, and into what degree of ſin, corruption, and wickedneſs, we fall. It is thus we may be apt to think, becauſe it is a way to flatter and encourage ourſelves in all ſin and corruption: and for this reaſon it is proper for us to ſee and to conſider, how far it is from being ſo that God has given us up to our own way, or thinks us now unworthy of his care: and for this purpoſe we muſt carefully obſerve what there is ſtill in man, which is truly valuable by its nature; which is that law of right and wrong, or that reaſon and underſtanding, which God hath given us, and which is in every man ſo fixed in his nature, that it cannot be deſtroyed. This is that which, we may well think ourſelves, will make

make us worthy of God's care, in every ſenſe, to reward or encourage us, if we do well; to correct and puniſh, if we do contrary to that rule and ſenſe which he has given us; and how far it is now that God takes care of us; both encouraging and requiring of men, to live according to their beſt nature and reaſon, and to come to him for further aid and aſſiſtance. This is what the ſcripture ſhews moſt plainly, from the beginning to the end; which therefore we ought for this purpoſe to conſider. DISC. XIX.

It is plain, by the ſcripture, that God did not withdraw himſelf from mankind after their fall, but that he continued his preſence among them; when thoſe, who liked to continue in his ſervice, and to obſerve his religion and rules, might come and be accepted according to the goodneſs and intention of their hearts. He had then a family in the world, whom he took care of; by whom he endeavoured to preſerve the reſt from great ungodlineſs and corruption. And, when theſe

DISC. XIX. themſelves were corrupted, by being mixed with the ungodly and ſinful; then it was he ſaid his ſpirit ſhould no longer ſtrive with men, ſince all was corrupt and wicked; and then it was, that he brought on the flood, that great proof, God has not given men up to their own wills, but that he requires from them goodneſs and obedience; and that ſin and wickedneſs are not ſuffered to go unpuniſhed. What is there in the ſcripture all through, but the care which God has taken of men in their preſent condition, though fallen and corrupt, to preſerve them as much as poſſible from ſin and wickedneſs, and to recover them by degrees, and by due means, to the ſame perfection of nature, the ſame image of God, in which they were created?

I muſt obſerve, in this place, that, though God did not ſhew himſelf nor ſend his own prophets, or perform his miracles to the heathens; yet ſtill he raiſed men among them that, by great improvement of their natural reaſon, were able to inſtruct them.

them. He gave them great means and advantages of knowing his true nature and perfections, which they abuſed. They were not neglected; and God did not leave himſelf without witneſs to them. But to one part of the world, and to the poſterity of thoſe, who from the beginning had been his people or his family; to them he ſtill continued his particular care and providence; calling Abraham firſt, while thoſe, who had been preſerved from the flood, were yet alive: calling him out from the wickedneſs, which began again to ſpread, and bringing him, from his own country and from his kindred, to a land, which he would give to him and to his poſterity, who ſhould be his people, living under his peculiar care and government. What care he took of theſe, who were his people; how ſeverely he puniſhed, how he ſaved and protected them; how particularly he taught them, requiring the ſtricteſt obedience to his laws; this is what all the reſt of the Old Teſtament ſhews us. He delivered them up to their enemies, when they ſinned, or ſaved and delivered DISC. XIX.

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delivered them, when they called upon him: he tried both ſevere and gracious means to keep them in their obedience: he ſhewed his preſence among them viſibly; he ſhewed it otherwiſe by miracles from time to time. He ſent his prophets, one after another, to inſtruct and to warn them. He roſe up early, it is ſaid, and took pains for them. It cannot be ſaid, that God did not take care of them. It was they, who took no care of themſelves, but gave themſelves up to ſin, and him, who was their glory, to other gods. God's particular care had been ineffectual among his own people; the heathens were gone far in great corruption and vice, debaſing and abuſing the reaſon which God had given them.

It was then, in God's due time, that God himſelf came down into the world in another manner than he had ever done; to ſhew his infinite regard and love for man his creature, though abaſed and fallen. He came and took the very nature itſelf of man upon him. He condeſcended to be born of a woman by his own divine power, and

and to come into the world in real human flesh; DISC. XIX. to shew himself upon earth in grace and goodness, and then to suffer and to die for man, for his sake; to purchase by his own sufferings the forgiveness of men's sins, and to gain to himself a power to bless and save as many as will come to him, relying upon his sufferings and his power alone, to bless and to save them. The Son of God, who was God himself, came down from heaven, and suffered, and died for men.

The use that I intend to make of this, at present, is, to shew us first of all of what value we are in the sight of God. For what can shew this more, than that the Son of God himself should come from heaven to save and to recover us? This must needs shew us, that there is something in human nature, though we abuse it, that is of truly great value, since it is so in God's sight. We should take care of ourselves, therefore, and endeavour to recover ourselves from every sin, to which we are given; that we may preserve and improve

DISC. XIX. improve that nature, which God hath given to us. If God ſo loved us, we ought truly, and in a right ſenſe, to love ourſelves: i. e. our true and real nature, which is reaſon and goodneſs, not pleaſure and ſin: which is ſin, becauſe it is unworthy, and contrary to the nature which God hath given us. It cannot be thought that he would come from heaven to ſave us, if there was not ſomething in our nature, or in our ſouls, that is truly excellent or valuable, which are God's gifts; or the nature itſelf given to us, which we corrupt and abuſe. We ought not to corrupt or abuſe it, if it is ſo valuable in the ſight of God: we ought to know ourſelves, and to be above this world, above the pleaſures, advantages, and temptations of it. For our ſoul itſelf is more excellent than all theſe things. All ſin is mean, and unworthy of men naturally; and nothing can teach us this more, than the care which God hath, by ſo many means, taken of men, having called us, at ſundry times, and in divers manners, by prophets, and, at laſt, by his Son. And it was not only to obtain happineſs

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pineſs for us, that all this was done; it was to ſave us from miſery; from death and puniſhment, the effect and conſequence of ſin: ſo that we are of value to ourſelves every way; we have the greateſt danger ſet before us, as well as the greateſt hopes: ſo far we ought to be from thinking that it is of no conſequence to us what we do. If this was ſo, we ſhould not ſee the things which we ſee in ſcripture; the care of God over man from the beginning, and at laſt his coming himſelf from heaven, and taking our nature upon him, to ſave and to recover us. This could not be, if it was of no conſequence to us what we do. But the care which God hath ſhewn, and what he has done for us, ought to teach us what we are; how capable both of greater happineſs and of greater miſery than of this world: that, therefore, we ſhould take true care of ourſelves; which is to avoid all ſin moſt carefully, and to aim at our everlaſting good and happineſs; which is the delivery from ſin, and the true recovery of our nature, to be begun by God's power and

bleſſing

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blessing in this life; and which will be the seed, the beginning of greater degrees both of goodness and happiness, continuing and increasing for ever.

DISCOURSE

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RELIGIOUS GRATITUDE AND ADMIRATION OF THE WORKS OF GOD.

PSALM VIII. 6, 7, 8, 9.

Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet; all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas. O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!

IT is good advice, that we ſhould uſe all occaſions and every temper we are in, to graft upon them

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them ſome diſpoſition, ſome thought of religion or duty towards God. For indeed there is no occaſion, nothing that can happen to us in this world, that is not from God, and comes from him either as a bleſſing or kindneſs, or as a correction and chaſtiſement to us. Therefore whatſoever we feel, whatever temper we are in, we ought to have ſome diſpoſition and affection towards God. If it is evil, it is his correction and chaſtiſement, and we muſt receive it with ſubmiſſion and contentment. If it is good, or naturally pleaſant to us, we ſhould not only be pleaſed with the thing itſelf, but ſhould look up to God as the author and giver of it: for ſo it is that we ſhall the better enjoy what is good, if we receive it with thankfulneſs and acknowledgment of that goodneſs, which gives it: and ſo it is, that ſuch ill, as there is in this world, will be made good, if we receive it with patience and ſubmiſſion, and learn by this to know our condition and our duty to God.

I ſhall,

I ſhall, at this time, ſpeak of the providence and goodneſs of God to men, eſpecially as it is ſeen in the works of the creation, or in the bleſſings of this world, of which the Pſalmiſt ſpeaks with ſuch joy and admiration: "when I "conſider thy heavens, the works of thy fingers, "the moon and the ſtars, which thou haſt or- "dained;" then I ſay, "what is man, that thou "art mindful of him, and the ſon of man, that "thou viſiteſt him? Thou haſt made him but a "little lower than the angels; thou haſt crowned "him with glory and worſhip. Thou haſt made "him to have dominion over the works of thy "hands, and thou haſt put all things in ſubjection "under his feet: all ſheep and oxen, yea and "the beaſts of the field, the fowl of the air, and "the fiſh of the ſea, and whatſoever paſſeth "through the paths of the ſeas. O Lord, our "Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the "earth! And that we may bring ourſelves to ſuch a ſtate of mind, of thankfulneſs and duty DISC. XX.

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to God, as well as joy and admiration of his works, I ſhall ſhew,

1ſt. That what appears ill to us, in the courſe of God's order and government of the world, is good, in ſome reſpect, to the whole; and may be good to us, if we conſider and uſe it as we ought to do.

2dly. That in the order of this world, and of God's works, there is regard and favour ſhewn to man, which ought to make us thankful to God.

And, laſtly, I ſhall ſhew, that the ſame goodneſs is indeed ſhewn, in ſeveral degrees, to other creatures in this world; that the whole world ſhews his mercy and goodneſs, which is over all his works; and that this ought the more to teach us to love and praiſe God for his goodneſs, and to learn of God to be good and merciful to others, in our wiſhes and our affections, and, as far as

we

we are able, by real acts of goodneſs and kind- DISC. XX.
neſs.

1ſt. I am to ſhew, that what appears to us ill, in the courſe or order of this world, is indeed good on the whole, and may be ſo to us, if we conſider it as we ought to do.

We cannot expect that every thing in the world ſhould be as we ourſelves may deſire; but we muſt conſider that God takes care of all, and not of us only; that we ourſelves are not judges of what is good for us. The winds and ſtorms, which may do us harm, are good on the whole; they clear the air, and make it healthy. They move things upon the face of the earth, and make them grow and flouriſh the better. They are of uſe too beſides, to keep us in ſome awe and fear of that mighty power that is in the world, which can raiſe theſe ſtorms, and raiſes them as it pleaſes. The froſt and ſnow, however hard and pinching they may ſometimes be, we know,

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do good. They ſtrengthen our bodies, and make the year afterwards more healthy to us and to other creatures: they prevent diſtempers and ills, that we do not know of: they make the ground fruitful and fit for tillage, more than all the greateſt labour of man can do. And then the cold and deadneſs of winter make the warmth and livelineſs, and fruitfulneſs of the ſpring the more welcome and agreeable to us. We ſhould not find the ſpring to be pleaſant, if it was *always* ſpring. Then the change of ſeaſons is generally by degrees, from cold to warmth, from warmth to heat. Thus God has ordered things better than we could have contrived or ordered them for ourſelves. Neither is it beſt that we ſhould have every thing to our wiſh and inclination. The cold does not do more to ſtrengthen our bodies, than other hardſhips, wants, and diſappointments do to ſtrengthen our minds. God knows this, and ordains what we think evil to do us good. It is true, that calamities to a country, and great afflictions to individuals, are ſometimes

puniſhments,

punishments, which are intended to shew God's justice, and to be a warning to others; but generally the calamities of a country, or our own afflictions, are sent as corrections and chastisements; intended to do us the greatest good, by teaching and warning us of all our duty, and one great duty in particular; which is that of patience and submission to the will of God. DISC. XX.

But now, 2dly, I shall shew what regard is shewn to men in the course and order of this world; how much greater than we can expect, as the Psalmist says; "Lord, what is man, that "thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, "that thou visitest him?" It is indeed plain, that man is made, under God, the lord and master of this world. It is plain, that man is the principal work of this creation which we see; and that it is for him more than any other creature that this world was adorned and made so great and so beautiful as it is. We

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may well ſay, it was for *man* that this was done, if we conſider the right reaſon of it; which is, that man only is capable of judging of the world, its beauty and order, and of ſeeing and acknowledging the maker in his works. Thus it is that all things are made for man; at leaſt to be the ſubjects of his knowledge and admiration; and many things are made directly to pleaſe or to ſerve him. It is for us we may well think that he clothes the flowers of the field with ſuch beauty, to pleaſe our eyes and to delight us. All ſheep and oxen, and other animals, are made to ſerve man; and the wild creatures fear him. We cannot ſee the reaſon or beauty of this world in many things, without conſidering its uſefulneſs to man. We may think that this world was made chiefly for man, if we remember that it is for us under God; and that what is not uſeful to us may yet ſtill be moſt uſeful to us, if it teaches us to worſhip, to honour, and know God from his works. Man could not be made to uſe all theſe creatures that are in the world. He cannot

have

have need of so many; but he is made to view and to consider them. He is made to receive pleasure from the sight of them: he is made capable of knowing his Creator, which is the greatest of all benefits. DISC. XX.

Let us consider now, what wisdom there is in the make and form of any one of the animals. We have not time, nor have we knowledge enough, to comprehend fully the wisdom with which they are made: but we can see plainly that every one of them is fitted exactly for that way of life for which he is designed. They have what is necessary for them; yet every one has something particular and different from the rest. From what we see of the world around us, we have reason to think that, on the whole, there is no room for any new creature to be made; but that the wisdom and goodness of God has made creatures of all the different sorts that it is possible should be. It must, therefore, be perfect, or infinite wisdom and goodness, that has shewn

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itſelf in the greatneſs and variety of God's works: and it muſt be the ſame wiſdom and goodneſs, that provides for ſuch a variety and number of creatures, that are in the world, what is neceſſary to preſerve and ſupport them: for they are all made to want food and nouriſhment; and this is provided for them.

Thus it is as to *living* creatures; but the ſame wiſdom and goodneſs is ſeen in the other things; in the meaneſt or moſt common herb or flower. Theſe are made all with the ſame fitneſs and beauty; and of theſe the difference and variety is ſo great, that we have reaſon to conclude, that there is nothing wanting, and that there is no room for any others beſides thoſe that are made. If we cannot at preſent carry our thoughts ſo far as to conſider the whole variety and abundance of theſe things, yet we may perceive that every one of them, the meaneſt herb or plant, is made with ſuch art and exactneſs, as all the ſkill of man is not able to equal. And ſuch is the

nature

nature of this knowledge of God, that it does not require that we ſhould have a full or perfect comprehenſion of the works of God, in order to ſee or to acknowledge his infinite power, wiſdom, and goodneſs; but, becauſe we are made naturally to conceive his infinite perfection, any part of his works is ſufficient, if we will attend to it, to give us a notion of that wiſdom and goodneſs, which all his works, if we could comprehend them all, would not fully ſhew. But it is uſeful to obſerve and conſider them; to take notice of as many as are in our way, and are plain and open to us: for this reaſon; becauſe, though any one of them is ſufficient to lead us to the thought of that Being, whom we are made naturally to conceive and to know, yet every one of them is a freſh admonition; and what all men want is not ſo much to know that there is a God who made this world and governs it, but to be put in mind of him continually; which we may be by conſidering and obſerving his works, DISC. XX.

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works, that are continually in our ways and before our eyes.

I ſay the true uſe of this conſideration of the works of God is to put us in mind of him. For, ſince he is above this world, and infinitely better and greater than all his works, ſo all his works cannot truly prove him or ſhew him to us: it muſt be himſelf that muſt manifeſt himſelf to us, in order that we may perceive him or know him worthily. But this he has done, by giving us a notion of him naturally in our hearts; by which it is poſſible for us to know him; which all his works could not otherwiſe have enabled us to do. But by this it is we are capable of knowing him; and then all his works and every one of them ſerve to awaken this notion within us, and to remind us of that infinite power, wiſdom, and goodneſs, that made us; and which muſt require that we ſhould worſhip, and ſerve, and obey him, both in our thoughts and in all the courſe and actions of our lives; for we cannot think

think that there is ſuch a Being who made us, who is infinitely perfect in power, wiſdom, and goodneſs, and not know that we are duſt and aſhes before him; and that we can have no true duty, nor true happineſs, but in loving, in ſerving, and obeying him. DISC. XX.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE XXI.

LOVE OF FRIENDS AND COUNTRY.

LUKE VII. 4, 5, 6.

When they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy, for whom he should do this; for he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a Synagogue. Then Jesus went with them.

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THOUGH the great end and concern of Chriſtians in general is to practiſe the duty and precepts of their religion, which will in the end be found its beſt and moſt effectual defence; yet, it is certain, that we are all required in ſcripture, ſo far at leaſt as our capacities and opportunities may

may ſerve, to defend our religion likewiſe by reaſon and argument againſt gainſayers. This duty is indeed particularly incumbent upon the teachers of Chriſtianity; who are both to ſtate the general reaſons upon which our faith and practice are built, and ſometimes to anſwer particular objections; which, if taken no notice of, might, perhaps, weaken the regard and veneration due to our moſt holy religion. DISC. XXI.

It may not, therefore, be improper, at this time, to take notice of an objection made to Chriſtianity, from its having no precept, that requires or recommends two affections that, ſome may think, ought to be recommended; namely, the particular love of a country and of friends. It muſt be allowed that the thing is true, that there is no precept concerning either of theſe in Chriſtianity, and that the objection is plauſible, becauſe theſe affections are ſo agreeable to nature, and ſo uſeful to the world. There may, however, be the leſs need to conſider particularly the reaſons of this

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this omiſſion, as the precepts of Chriſtianity appear to be really founded upon better and purer principles, in which even theſe are included with more advantage, than if they had been mentioned and inſiſted on themſelves.

In this view of the ſubject, we ſhall both have an anſwer to the objection, and ſhall be directed (which is of greater uſe) to regulate our own affections by the better and more perfect rules of the goſpel.

It will be found very conſiderable, that, though there is indeed no precept that recommends either the love of a country or of friends, yet we have the cleareſt and moſt perfect examples of this in our Saviour himſelf, as well as in others, the great teachers of our religion, who are at the ſame time propoſed to our imitation.

In the paſſage, from which my text is taken, we ſee that our Saviour ſeems to allow the recommendation

mendation of a foreigner to his favour, from this argument, that, being a foreigner, he loved their country, and had been a benefactor to it. For it is ſaid, upon hearing this, he conſented, and went with them. It was indeed a rule, which Chriſt generally obſerved, to confine his miracles, as well as his doctrine, in his own life-time, to the people of his own nation; as it appears particularly in the hiſtory of the Canaanitiſh woman deſiring him to heal her ſon; where, though he complied, yet it was with ſome difficulty, and not without informing her, that it was not what he uſually did. So that the deſign of the Evangeliſt, in relating ſo particularly what arguments the Jews uſed to prevail upon him, ſeems to be to account for it, why our Saviour, in this other inſtance, departed from his rule. DISC. XXI.

I know in this practice of our Saviour it may be truly ſaid, that he acted indeed from higher reaſons than from the diſtinction of a country: that the difference, which he made, was from the

deſign

DISC. XXI. design itself of the gospel, which, in its stated order, was first of all to be delivered and proved to the people of Israel or the Jews; that this fact, therefore, may not imply that particular and nearer affection which is meant by the words and which I speak of. It must, therefore, be owned, that from the fact itself it does not follow that our Saviour had that affection which is meant; yet, upon the whole appearance of his life and character considered with this fact, I think it cannot be doubted. For, in other instances, we see our Saviour affectionate, compassionate, weeping. We see that there was one disciple whom he loved, as it must needs be understood, more than others: and, if we cannot doubt, that he gave an example of friendship, why should we doubt, that he gave a real example of the love of a country; which is an affection so much larger and so much less discriminating or personal? We cannot doubt, that, when coming in sight of Jerusalem, so near the time of his sufferings, he wept over it; when he said, "if thou hadst known, even thou, in

"this

" this thy day, the things which belong to thy " peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes; " for the days ſhall come upon thee, that thine " enemies ſhall caſt a trench about thee, and " compaſs thee round, and keep thee in on every " ſide, and ſhall lay thee even with the ground, " and thy children within thee!" When he ſaid this, and thus mourned over Jeruſalem, in a view plainly of its temporal calamities and ruin, as a nation, it cannot be doubted but he had at that time thoſe which are the beſt affections of a man, a compaſſion and love of his country. But, if it is thus to be underſtood, it will be allowed that there cannot be a better example of the love and concern for one's people and country, than that which our Saviour has ſhewn: and this may be added as another inſtance; his lamenting at another time, and after this, and weeping, as it ſeems, again over this unhappy city and people, with the tendereſt concern, when at the ſame time he had inveighed ſo ſeverely againſt the perverſeneſs and hypocriſy of their Scribes and Pha- DISC. XXI.

DISC. XXI. riſees, by whom they were deceived: "Oh, "Jeruſalem, Jeruſalem, thou, that killeſt the "prophets, and ſtoneſt them that were ſent unto "thee; how often would I have gathered thy "children together, even as a hen gathereth her "chickens under her wings, but ye would not! "Behold! your houſe is left unto you deſolate!" Theſe things will certainly prove that we do not want an example, ſuch as we might expect in Chriſtianity: but it may be proper to obſerve, that the example is the more excellent, becauſe the affection and concern is ſo great towards a people, who at that time were ſo undeſerving as the Jews were.

If other examples are wanted, we have another in St. Paul, whoſe concern for his country, for his brethren in an human ſenſe, was ſo great, that it drew him, in ſome inſtances, out of his way: ſince it appears, that, though his commiſſion was to the Gentiles, yet he could not forbear uſing all his endeavours, or more than ſeemed required of him,

him, to convert and ſave the Jews. And in the Old Teſtament nothing is more evident than the love that the beſt of their people always had for their country, which is in ſo many places ſo affectionately expreſſed. The beſt expreſſion in general of this affection, that ever was written or deſcribed, I think, is in a Pſalm, that was written upon the occaſion of one of their public feaſts, and which ſeems to expreſs what was the national ſentiment of that people; I mean of the beſt and moſt religious of them: "I was glad, when they "ſaid unto me, we will go into the houſe of the "Lord." We went accordingly, and "our feet "ſtood in thy gates, O Jeruſalem. Jeruſalem is "built as a city that is at unity in itſelf. For "thither the tribes go up, even the tribes of the "Lord, to teſtify unto Iſrael, to give thanks unto "the name of the Lord. There is the ſeat of "judgment, even the ſeat of the houſe of David. "Oh, pray for the peace of Jeruſalem: they ſhall "proſper that love thee. Peace be within thy "walls, and plenteouſneſs within thy palaces. DISC. XXI.

DISC. XXI. For my brethren and companions' ſakes I will wiſh thee proſperity! Yea, even becauſe of the houſe "of the Lord our God, I will ſeek to do thee "good."

Let it be remembered, therefore, that we have in ſcripture, and in the goſpel, ſo much recommendation, or allowance at leaſt, of theſe affections by example; and let it be conſidered how far this will ſtand inſtead of precepts.

It is what we ſhould expect, when God vouchſafes to reveal himſelf, and to give laws and rules to mankind, that he will require only thoſe duties and virtues, which want to be ſet in view and enforced, and which had not before been ſufficiently acknowledged or practiſed. For what reaſon would there be to do again what nature had ſufficiently done before; to inculcate again what natural light ſufficiently teaches, and natural motives and affections do indeed ſufficiently excite and promote? We ſee that particular affections,

tions, thoſe for friends and for a country, are in a great degree natural to us: and, beſides, ſo cheriſhed by cuſtom, continual encouragement, and applauſe, they are ſometimes found exceſſive and irregular, as well as deficient. It is even likely, that the love of a country, being the largeſt and beſt of all affections, that are ſhort of real integrity, of entire and perfect duty to God and to mankind, will, for this very reaſon, be the more deceitful, and have the worſe effects, becauſe of the exceſs of it; if injuſtice and injuries, that may proceed from it, will be the leſs obſerved; and, inſtead of juſt cenſure, may meet with favour and applauſe. And it is ſeen in fact, that it is from partiality to a country, which we allow or applaud, that not only contempt or diſlike of other nations, but the greateſt injuries and cruelties have proceeded. It is for no other reaſon than this, that, while cruelty or injuſtice to one ſingle perſon is often deteſted, at it deſerves, the ſame injuries committed to whole nations ſhall paſs, as is often ſeen, with very little condemnation, and DISC. XXI.

DISC. XXI. find but very little cenſure from men. It may deſerve to be conſidered in particular, that, at the very time, when our Saviour appeared, the ill effects of this love, a paſſion for a country, not governed by juſt humanity or piety, were ſeen in the higheſt degree. At that time, it is viſible, that the Jews abhorred all other nations; that the Greeks and Romans in their turn called other people, in contempt, *barbarians*; and the Romans, from this contempt, proceeded to the greateſt injuries. It is plain that, from the love of their country, they could juſtify themſelves in the attempt of laying ſlavery on all the reſt of mankind. We may, therefore, eaſily ſee, that at this time eſpecially there could be no reaſon to ſpeak much of the love of a country, or, by divine authority, to require an affection that already appeared to be exceſſive, and which, being abuſed, had done ſo much real miſchief in the world. If men do not enough condemn theſe ill effects, when they proceed from ſo favourable a cauſe, there was the leſs reaſon that a divine law ſhould

give encouragement to an affection that is so easily abused. What the time itself required was to take away distinctions that had been too much regarded, to open and enlarge the affections of men, and to recommend and require only the love of God and universal love or charity to men. DISC. XXI.

This is what the Christian morality and religion tend to. They every where speak of the love of God and of man, but make no mention of a country or friends. It was enough that there were examples of them; which we may imitate, when we are first secured from the abuses and corruptions, to which these affections are naturally subject. By this silence, and by these precepts, the violence of those attachments is provided against, and the most effectual method taken to set all our affections right, by beginning their reformation at the right end. For, though the love of friends, or of a country, will by no means produce universal love, or entire and perfect duty, and

DISC. XXI. will often, as it might eaſily be ſhewn, be prejudicial to it; yet a real love of God and of men, for *his* ſake, will neceſſarily produce the love of country and of friends. It ſuppoſes theſe in a due degree, and really includes them. And, as to the greater concern and preference of affection to thoſe who are near to us, (which is ſo right, and, when well governed, has the beſt effects) there was no need that religion ſhould require them. Nature itſelf is ſufficient for this purpoſe; and he, who is the author of nature as well as religion, could not but know its force. If we can, upon any juſt principles, enlarge our affections, and make benevolence and duty as extenſive as they ought to be, nature itſelf will do the reſt, and will aſſign and proportion our concern, as particular circumſtances or relations require. Our own experience will ſhew us, that the difficult part is to free the mind from unreaſonable partiality and attachment to ſome; from enmity or antipathy to others. When this is done, the beſt affection will ſtill remain, or will ſoon return and

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take place with the greateſt advantage from the true amendment of our temper and diſpoſition. For no one can think that he, who has the juſt affections of human nature, will not have a real concern or affection for his country; or, that he, who could really love his enemies, ſhould ever be wanting to his friends: yet this is all that is neceſſary to explain why precepts of theſe duties are omitted in the goſpel. DISC. XXI.

But it is to be obſerved farther, that the need of ſuch precepts, as the goſpel has given, was not only the more to ſecure our performance of every inferior duty included in them; but that ſuch principles are neceſſary even to give them their due value and goodneſs, which otherwiſe they have not. For we do not imagine, when one, who is without true principles, happens to do right, from an affection to his family or his friends, or zeal for his country, or any other ſpecious name, that the thing is right; that the perſon is then virtuous or good. But, when the ſame things are done

DISC. XXI. done from *real* affection, and ſuch as is juſt, to mankind, conſiderately, and with regard to what is beſt upon the whole, it is then virtue; and, when it proceeds from the love of God, and regard and duty to him, it is then religion.

It is eaſy to ſee the difference of theſe things, and it may, therefore, be the leſs neceſſary to dwell upon them. This is certain, that the deſign of the goſpel was to give men the beſt principles, to make them truly virtuous and good: to enable its diſciples to do more than men who are without theſe principles, as well as to do the ſame things much better. This deſign of the goſpel our Saviour plainly ſhews, where he ſays, "If ye love "them that love you, what thanks have you? "Do not even the publicans the ſame? If ye "ſalute them that ſalute you, what thanks have "ye? Do not even the publicans as much as "this? But be ye perfect, *i. e.* in affection, "even as your father, which is in heaven, is per-"fect." By this it appears, that the goſpel ſuppoſes

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those duties, which it does not require, and teaches us that there is no great merit or thanks in performing those only, which it is inexcusable and unnatural to neglect.

It teaches us indeed not to despise any thing; but, "whatever things are honest and of good re-"port, if there be any virtue, or if there be "any praise, to think on these things." But its great concern is to give us those true principles, from which all duty will proceed: which is a love and duty to God, producing necessarily a love and duty towards men. It is, therefore, evident, that there was no reason that this religion should require, or dwell upon, those particular affections, which, without these principles, will always be imperfect, irregular, and without true goodness; and with these cannot be wanting, but must have their true value and effect.

And if this objection is now answered sufficiently, it will appear, at the same time, that, though

DISC. XXI. though it is uſeful that ſome ſhould know what objections are made to Chriſtianity, and ſhould endeavour upon all proper occaſions to defend their religion, yet, for our own practice, and as a rule of life, either for ourſelves or others, we can find none ſo perfect, or ſo good, as that which is declared to us in the goſpel. We ought not, therefore, either to be hindered or offended by ſuch objections, or to be long amuſed by endeavouring to anſwer them: but to keep our eye upon thoſe plain and better things, which are taught with the greateſt force in the goſpel; and which are the great principles, to regulate all our life and practice. Theſe beſt principles are plainly the love of God and man: or indeed it is religion itſelf, from which, if it be real and ſincere, every other duty muſt neceſſarily proceed. We may, therefore, wonder how the objection, of which I have ſpoken, could be raiſed; and, inſtead of ſtaying long, or taking great pains, to anſwer it, we may well ſay, on the other ſide, that the want of all due affection, the want of due ſervice

vice or concern for our country or our friends, DISC. XXI. every corruption and every vice can be owing to nothing ſo much, as to the neglect of religion, by which every affection and duty will be ſecured. "For my brethren and companions' "ſakes, I will wiſh thee proſperity" is a very natural ſentiment; but the other is ſtronger; "Becauſe of the houſe of the Lord our God, "I will ſeek to do thee good." At all times it was religion, that moſt effectually connected mankind, and endeared them to one another; and it cannot be otherwiſe now. By this we ſhall ſee how uſeful and neceſſary religion is to the true intereſt and happineſs of men in this preſent life; and how uſeful we ourſelves ſhall be, if, practiſing its precepts, we can recommend them effectually to others; ſince it is upon theſe that all true virtue and goodneſs depend; which the goſpel teaches upon the beſt principles, as well as enforces upon the ſtrongeſt and moſt powerful motives.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE XXII.

DEPENDENCE ON GOD'S PROVIDENCE.

MATTHEW VI. 11.

Give us this day our daily bread.

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OUR Lord, after inſtructing us to pray in the firſt place for bleſſings ſpiritual and eternal, permits us, in the following part of the prayer, to aſk for the neceſſaries and comforts of this preſent life: "Give us this day, our daily bread."

By *bread*, in the original, according to an old commentator, is to be underſtood all manner of ſuſtenance. Accordingly, our Saviour here means by this expreſſion all that pertains to the neceſ-

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fity of this life. Hence we learn to depend upon God for every thing. His providence takes into conſideration all our concerns, and provides for our temporal accommodation as well as our eternal happineſs. After directing us to pray for the coming of his kingdom, and that his will may be done on earth as it is in heaven, our Saviour allows us to conſider *ourſelves:* nay, he directs us to pray to our heavenly Father upon this ſubject: "Give us our daily bread." DISC. XXII.

By theſe words, we pray in effect for the ſupport of our lives, by which we are rendered capable of receiving and enjoying all other good things. We are thus taught to expreſs our ſenſe of an entire dependence upon God; confeſſing that we ſubſiſt by his care and bounty; diſclaiming conſequently all confidence in any other means. Our induſtry and all our own contrivances may be ineffectual; our riches may take to themſelves wings and fly away, and all friends may fail us. Upon God alone we may ſecurely rely. We may throw

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throw our care upon him; for he careth for us, and hath promiſed to give unto ſuch as aſk of him all ſuch good things as may be needful for them. "Give us this day;" or, as it is in St. Luke, "day by day." We are not to be covetous after heaps of treaſure, after large ſtores laid up for many years. Such covetouſneſs is a part of atheiſm, or heatheniſh idolatry. "After theſe "things," as our Lord ſays, "do the Gentiles "ſeek." Chriſtianity is deſigned to cut off all exorbitant deſires and anxious cares. Chriſt would not have the profeſſors of his religion over ſolicitous about any thing here. "Take no thought," ſays he to his diſciples, "what ye ſhall eat, or "what ye ſhall drink." This was the error of the old Gentiles, who knew not God; having neither a right ſenſe of the providence of God, in diſpoſing of all temporal things here upon earth; nor that certain expectation, which the goſpel has given us, of an eternal kingdom hereafter in the heavens. Theſe men (excepting ſome few noble ſpirits) lived after the Epicurean maxim, "Let

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"us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die;" placing the whole of their happineſs in ſuch enjoyments as they poſſeſſed in common with the beaſts that periſh. Which gratifications of ſenſe our Saviour commanded his diſciples to have no regard for, comparatively with their care for the concerns of eternity. As Chriſtians, we ought to be dead to the pleaſures of this world, its pomps and vanities: we expect a better life, which is hid with Chriſt in God. The miſtakes and vices of former ages "God winked at: but "now hath he commanded all men every where "to repent; ſince life and immortality are "brought to light through the goſpel." We ſhould conſider ourſelves as candidates for heaven, and muſt acknowledge then that we have fair expectations before us, and a prize worth contending for. To a man, whoſe proſpects are thus opened, what is there in this world to engage his affections or purſuits? How tranſitory its pleaſures; how uncertain its riches; how unſatisfactory and vain its titles and honours! There

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is no proportion between things finite and infinite; no comparison between things temporal and eternal: it will be unspeakably a greater happiness to be judged worthy of the meanest portion of that eternal inheritance, "where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where "thieves do not break through and steal;" than to be put in possession of all the short-lived empires of this world, and of all those transitory riches, which of themselves moulder away in a few years into that dust from whence they were originally taken. It is even here a greater pleasure to save a soul from death, by converting a sinner from the error of his way, than sensual and voluptuous persons ever find in the highest gratifications of sense, or worldly minds in the possession and enjoyment of the largest treasures.

Let us then seek the kingdom of God in the first place, where crowns of glory are prepared for such as fulfil the pleasure of the Lord. If

then we keep our eyes ſteadily fixed upon this our native home and higher country, we ſhall look down upon all enjoyments here below: our preſent habitation will comparatively appear but as an inn with indifferent and poor accommodations. While we thus conſider ourſelves as ſojourners and ſtrangers, we ſhall more eaſily, as St. Peter adviſes, "abſtain from fleſhly luſts, "which war againſt the ſoul." While we have our happy haven in view, we may deſire indeed a calm paſſage, but we ſhall be enabled to endure with patience all labours and difficulties, all ſtorms and tempeſts. DISC. XXII.

This is the temper of mind the goſpel of Chriſt ſhould bring us to, before which all the glories of this world fade away. We are taught, in the words of the text, to pray only for our *daily bread*: *i. e.* we ſhould be content to have our neceſſities ſupplied with the coarſeſt diet and meaneſt apparel, if our condition requires it, and God's providence in an honeſt way allots us no

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other. Not that greater abundance is forbidden, if God's providence ſends it: a diſtinction and ſubordination of ranks is neceſſary for the good of the world in general. I ſay then, that we may lawfully have great poſſeſſions, but we ſhould not love them inordinately; we ſhould preſerve an heart to uſe them, and to beſtow them for the purpoſe they were given us: we ſhould conſider our neighbour, and be ready to do all the good in our power; we ſhould be "rich in good "works, ready to diſtribute, willing to commu-"nicate." Our property is certainly ours, by the laws of the land: but we ought not to conſider it as ſuch in a Chriſtian ſenſe. "For the earth "is the Lord's, and all that is therein." Thoſe, who are rich in this world, ſhould take this into conſideration; and they "will not be high-"minded, nor truſt in uncertain riches; but put "their truſt in the living God, who giveth them "richly all things to enjoy." We are to conſider ourſelves, and all that we have, as God's; that he may take our ſubſtance away every hour: and

we ſhould be content he ſhould do ſo at his good pleaſure. Thus we ſhall fulfil the duty implied in the text, and conſider every thing but as daily bread. We are to ſeek and to pray for God's kingdom in the firſt place, and that his will may be done, as in heaven, ſo upon earth, by all others, and by ourſelves. We are then permitted to take care of our condition here. Nay, diligence and induſtry, in our reſpective callings, are moſt commendable. Our Lord himſelf has directed us to pray to, and to depend upon, our heavenly Father, for ſuch a proviſion as he may think needful. But we muſt not be over ſolicitous nor ſo anxious about the affairs of the preſent life, as to neglect the greater and more important concerns of that which is to come. A true Chriſtian muſt "take no thought for the mor-"row:" by which words, however, our Saviour means only to prohibit ſuch a care of the world, which he himſelf elſewhere deſcribes, (Matt. 13. 22.) as "choking the word, ſo that it becometh "unfruitful." It being too natural for worldly DISC. XXII.

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and ambitious minds, continually to enlarge their prospect of the morrow, and to extend their hopes and designs from one uncertain indeterminate time to another; till death, unexpected, blasts all that thought at once, and surprizes them unfruitful of any works of righteousness. Which folly he very affectionately reproves in the parable of the rich man, who was blessing himself, in the vain thoughts of his stores laid up for many years, that very night when his soul was required of him. These are the words of our Saviour in another place—"No man can serve two masters; "for he will hate the one, and love the other; "or else he will hold to the one, and despise the "other: ye cannot serve God and mammon:" *i. e.* our care must be, not to let our affections be so enslaved to the mammon of unrighteousness, as to forget our duty towards our heavenly master. St. John in his first Epistle (ch. 2. 15.) gives a like exhortation: "Love not the world, neither "the things that are in the world; if any man "love the world, the love of the Father is not

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"in him." Let your principal and chief care be to ſecure your eternal intereſt: "ſeek" (I muſt repeat) "the kingdom of God" in the firſt place, and the bleſſing of providence upon your ordinary induſtry will provide you ſuch a proportion of temporal things, as he ſhall ſee beſt and moſt expedient for you. In ſome particular caſes, God has given extraordinary examples of this kind: as in the inſtance of Solomon, (1 Kings, 3. 11.) God ſaid unto him, "Becauſe thou haſt "not aſked for thyſelf riches, nor the life of "thine enemies, but underſtanding to diſcern "judgment; behold, I have given thee a wiſe "and an underſtanding heart: and I have alſo "given thee, what thou haſt not aſked, both "riches and honour." Our Saviour does not abſolutely promiſe any thing of this ſort to his diſciples; becauſe "his kingdom is not of this "world." But a competency of temporal bleſſings he encourages them to expect ſhall be added unto them; always excepting perſe-

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It is plain that our Saviour neither means by the words of the text, nor by any other expreſſions he at any time uſes, to encourage us to neglect the uſual and natural means of providing for our ſubſiſtence; he intends only to forbid ſuch a ſolicitude about worldly affairs, as implies either a diſtruſt of God's providence, or the not having a right ſenſe of it, or not making a juſt acknowledgment of it in all things. A diſciple of Chriſt ſhould have it conſtantly and habitually impreſſed upon his mind, that it is our heavenly Father, who continually ſupplies us with neceſſaries, for the preſervation of that being which he at firſt gave us: that it is he, "who cauſes his ſun "to riſe, and ſends us rain and fruitful ſeaſons; "filling our hearts with food and gladneſs;" that it is he, "who maketh the graſs to grow upon the "mountains; giving even to the beaſt his food, "and to the young ravens which cry; and filling

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"all things living with plenteouſneſs:" or, as our Saviour himſelf deſcribes it ſtill more ſublimely—"Behold the fowls of the air; they ſow "not, neither do they reap, nor gather into "barns: yet your heavenly Father feedeth them:" and, "conſider the lilies of the field; they toil "not, neither do they ſpin; and yet, I ſay unto "you, that even Solomon, in all his glory, was "not arrayed like one of them: wherefore, if "God ſo clothe the graſs of the field, which to-"day is, and to-morrow is caſt into the oven, "ſhall he not much more clothe you, O ye of "little faith?" What men, careleſs and ignorant of the truth, uſually ſtyle natural cauſes, are indeed nothing but inſtruments in the hands of God: and the courſe of nature, as it is commonly called, ſhews the regularity of his operations, who made and governs all things. It is he alone, therefore, "who gives us richly all things we "enjoy;" even all thoſe things which we uſually aſcribe to natural cauſes: which very ſame cauſes, whenſoever he pleaſes, he can make to be the inſtruments DISC. XXII.

DISC. XXIX. inſtruments of our puniſhment, as well as of our ſupport. He can (as Moſes elegantly expreſſes it) "make the heavens to be braſs, and the "earth iron:" he can ſcorch with drought, or drown with moiſture, or blaſt with unwholeſome winds, in order to deſtroy with famine, and "make a fruitful land barren for the wickedneſs "of them that dwell therein:" or, without removing the bleſſings themſelves, he can, at any time, withdraw the benefit and the effect of them. For "man liveth not by bread alone, "but by every word that proceedeth out of the "mouth of God;" *i. e.* by his bleſſing upon the inſtruments of nature: which bleſſing, whenſoever he pleaſes to withdraw, and "with rebukes "doth chaſten man for ſin, he maketh his beauty "to conſume away, as it were a moth fretting a "garment." (Pſ. 39. 11.) Without the divine bleſſing, therefore, all care, all labour, all induſtry, are in vain; nay, even the very poſſeſſion of all temporal good things will afford no enjoyment. But they who, by ſeeking, with that firſt and chief

chief care, the righteouſneſs of God's kingdom, have ſecured to themſelves his favour and bleſſing, may ſafely depend and rely upon his providence; that he, who feeds the fowls of the air, and clothes even the lilies of the field, will much more take care of them. Not in the way of idleneſs and ſloth: for ſimilitudes are not to be applied literally, but in proportion to the nature of the things compared: he, who provides for the fowls of the air and the lilies of the field, in a way ſuitable to their nature, will much more provide for men in a way ſuitable to ours: either after a ſupernatural manner, in ſuch extraordinary caſes as was that of the Apoſtle's miſſion to preach the goſpel; or elſe, in ordinary caſes, by the natural means of labour and induſtry, whereby God has appointed that the earth ſhall bring forth her increaſe. In the uſe of which means, it is our duty to rely upon providence for his bleſſings upon the effect. "If any would not work," ſays St. Paul, "neither ſhould he eat:" and yet the ſame Apoſtle exhorts (Phil. 4. 6.) "Be careful for nothing; "but

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"but in every thing, by prayer and ſupplication, "let your requeſts be made known unto God." Of him, who is moſt condeſcendingly good, we are taught to aſk our daily bread; for his providence takes care of all our concerns, the minuteſt, as well as thoſe of the higheſt importance; according to that tender expreſſion of our Saviour—"The very hairs of your head are all "numbered."

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THE MARRIAGE FEAST.

MATTHEW XXII. 2.

The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son.

THIS was ſpoken by our Saviour to the Jews, principally to reproach them, for not receiving ſo gracious a call as that which God made to men by the goſpel: to tell them, how many of thoſe, who ſhould firſt be called, would refuſe it; and how then the ſame gracious offer would be made to others: to the Gentiles, who would, many of them, receive it, as is implied in the end of the parable.

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"The kingdom of heaven," ſays our Saviour, "is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his ſon; and ſent forth his ſervants to "call them that were bidden to the wedding: "and they would not come. Again, he ſent "forth other ſervants, ſaying, Tell them which "are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner; "my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all "things are ready; come unto the marriage. "But they made light of it, and went their way; "one to his farm, and another to his merchandiſe: and the remnant took his ſervants, and "entreated them ſpitefully, and ſlew them."

From this it is proper to obſerve, in how kind and in how preſſing a manner God invited, or called, the Jews to come into the goſpel; which is here ſpoken of, as a marriage for his ſon, and as a feaſt of joy; to ſignify the gracious and kind covenant of favour and mercy, to which they were called. The Jews, before all others, had been bidden to this marriage by Chriſt himſelf,

and

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and ſome of his diſciples in his life-time, preaching the kingdom of God. But the marriage or the goſpel, in its full force, or power and glory, was not to be till after our Saviour's death. Then he ſent his ſervants, the Apoſtles, to call them, now at the time, which had been bidden and had notice before, to the wedding. And when they would not come upon this call, he ſent other ſervants, with the ſame meſſage, but more preſſing; "tell them," ſays he, "which are bidden, Be-"hold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen "and my fatlings are killed, and all things are "ready; come unto the marriage. But they "made light of it," it is ſaid, "and went their "way; one to his farm and another to his mer-"chandize: and the reſt took his ſervants, and "entreated them ſpitefully, and ſlew them." Such was their return for God's mercy and call to them by thoſe he ſent. For which it is ſaid, that, "when the king heard thereof, he was "wroth; and he ſent forth his armies and de-"ſtroyed thoſe murderers, and burnt up their "city;"

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"city;" which was accompliſhed (or fulfilled) upon the Jews in a ſhort time after. God did ſend forth his armies, who did deſtroy them, and burnt up their city. So that, as our Saviour ſaid, "not one ſtone was left upon another, which was "not thrown down." Then afterwards, our Saviour ſpeaks of a more general call, that ſhould be made, of people of all nations, to the faith of Chriſt and of the goſpel; when the Jews had put it from them; that, in the end, the whole world, as it may be ſaid, ſhould be converted to ſome belief or profeſſion of the goſpel; though not all to ſuch a belief as ſhould be effectual or ſaving. This our Saviour teaches in the following words of the parable—Then, ſays he, (*i. e.* after the Jews had been refuſed and given up to deſtruction, for refuſing ſuch gracious and earneſt invitation) "Then ſaith the king to his ſervants, the wed-"ding is ready; but they, which were bidden, "were not worthy. Go ye, therefore, into the "highways, and as many as ye ſhall find, bid to "the marriage. So thoſe ſervants went out into the highways,

"highways, and gathered together all, as many DISC. XXIII.
"as they found, both good and bad; and the
"wedding was furniſhed with gueſts. But, when
"the king came in to ſee the gueſts, he ſaw
"there a man, who had not on a wedding gar-
"ment. And he ſaid, Friend, How cameſt thou
"in hither, not having on a wedding garment?
"And he was ſpeechleſs. Then ſaid he to the
"ſervant, Bind him hand and foot, and take him
"away, and caſt him into outer darkneſs: there
"ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of teeth. For
"many are called, but few are choſen."

This is the whole parable: upon which it is natural to obſerve, in the firſt place, that the goſpel is here ſpoken of as the moſt gracious and kindeſt invitation of God to men; and, in the next place, that this infinite grace and kindneſs of God requires to be received with due diſpoſition of mind, and ought to have powerful effects upon us; and that without this, without having on the proper wedding garment, we are not

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"city;" which was accomplished (or fulfilled) upon the Jews in a short time after. God did send forth his armies, who did destroy them, and burnt up their city. So that, as our Saviour said, "not one stone was left upon another, which was "not thrown down." Then afterwards, our Saviour speaks of a more general call, that should be made, of people of all nations, to the faith of Christ and of the gospel; when the Jews had put it from them; that, in the end, the whole world, as it may be said, should be converted to some belief or profession of the gospel; though not all to such a belief as should be effectual or saving. This our Saviour teaches in the following words of the parable—Then, says he, (*i. e.* after the Jews had been refused and given up to destruction, for refusing such gracious and earnest invitation) "Then saith the king to his servants, the wed-"ding is ready; but they, which were bidden, "were not worthy. Go ye, therefore, into the "highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to "the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways,

"highways, and gathered together all, as many DISC. XXIII.
"as they found, both good and bad; and the
"wedding was furniſhed with gueſts. But, when
"the king came in to ſee the gueſts, he ſaw
"there a man, who had not on a wedding gar-
"ment. And he ſaid, Friend, How cameſt thou
"in hither, not having on a wedding garment?
"And he was ſpeechleſs. Then ſaid he to the
"ſervant, Bind him hand and foot, and take him
"away, and caſt him into outer darkneſs: there
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DISC. XXIII. worthy to be admitted, and cannot receive the benefits that are offered to us.

First of all, we see in this parable, that the gospel is spoken of as the most gracious and kindest invitation of God to men. It is spoken of as a feast of joy, a marriage feast, which God made for his Son. The Son of God is *Christ*, whom he sent into the world. And it is upon his account, that this feast, or this gracious call and invitation to men, is said to be made. But it is grace and kindness plainly that is meant, when the gospel is called a feast. "Behold, my "oxen and my fatlings are killed; and all things "are now ready: come to the marriage." It is, therefore, first, a state of favour and acceptance with God, to which we are called; and it is besides to happiness and enjoyment with Christ in this life in some measure, and hereafter more perfectly: for we are invited to his feast, which must mean joy and happiness. Now the gospel itself, in the meaning of the word, is *glad tidings*, or the

the declaration of ſomething agreeable and good to men: and ſo it was preached at firſt both by our Saviour himſelf and his Apoſtles. They preached the goſpel, or the glad tidings of the kingdom, and they called upon men to repent, for this reaſon, becauſe "the kingdom of God "was at hand." And afterwards we ſee that the glad tidings, and the kingdom which they meant, was firſt of all forgiveneſs of all paſt ſins, or a ſtate of favour and acceptance with God; then happineſs and ſatisfaction in this life from a ſenſe of God's favour, and the hope of everlaſting happineſs in another life. It appears plainly, that theſe are the bleſſings which are promiſed to men in the goſpel; or that it is not only happineſs in another world, though this is the greateſt; but it is ſome degree of happineſs, or enjoyment and ſatisfaction in the ways of religion and goodneſs, even in this preſent life. For, if this was always true in ſome meaſure, if it was ſaid formerly, that the ways of wiſdom and goodneſs are ways of pleaſantneſs, and that all her paths are peace; DISC. XXIII.

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we cannot doubt, but it is ſo more in reſpect of true and real happineſs now under the goſpel; ſince this is plainly the moſt gracious call and invitation of God to men. It is ſo plainly in its manner; for it was the call of God by his own Son; and by his Son born among men, and living and converſing with them, with the greateſt kindneſs and condeſcenſion. The former law of God was delivered with terror, amidſt thunders and lightnings and fire; which was ſo terrible, that the people could not come near nor look upon it: but the goſpel was delivered by Chriſt himſelf firſt of all in an human form like ourſelves, and by his Apoſtles, with the greateſt condeſcenſion, and in the kindeſt and moſt gracious manner. Then one of the bleſſings, which it offered and promiſed to men, was preſent forgiveneſs and acceptance with God: and to prove this, the bleſſing of his ſpirit was given in our minds. "For the "kingdom of God," ſaith the Apoſtle, "is not "meat and drink; but righteouſneſs, and peace, "and joy in the Holy Ghoſt." The Spirit of God

God would be given not only to direct, and purify, and govern our minds, but to display peace and satisfaction in some measure, and more than is natural with our infirmities even in this present life. For there is no doubt, but the Spirit of God is promised to Christians; and we cannot suppose, but, where it has had its due effect to purify and govern our minds, it will bring with it a peace, and satisfaction, and pleasure, such as shall be sufficient for us in this life. But I say it must have this effect *first;* and therefore it is required, that these great blessings of God should be received with a due disposition, and produce in us the suitable fruits of piety and goodness. DISC. XXIII.

Now the due disposition, with which the blessings of God must be received, is first of all that of repentance, which is a conviction and sorrow for sins; and not only this, but a sense that we are not able to recover ourselves, but by the favour and mercy of God. For this is that repentance which God requires, and which leads to

DISC. XXIII. a faith or belief in that means of our reconciliation and acceptance, which is set forth in the gospel. For "the whole have no need of a physician," as our Saviour says, "but they that are "sick;" and "he came not to call the righteous," (if any were so) "but sinners to repentance." And, if we are sensible of this—of our unworthiness, and of our dependence only upon that atonement and satisfaction, which God hath procured for us; then we shall see the mercy and goodness of God, and be sensible of it, as we ought to be: and then the forgiveness of the gospel, and the hope that it sets before us of everlasting happiness hereafter—these blessings of God will be the means to make us know the more our duty to him, and to be more sensible of it than others are, who know only the goodness of God in this present world; which however ought itself to be the means to make men thankful and obedient to him.

But

But the mercies of God in the gospel are greater than those which we can see in this present world: they are as much greater, as the salvation of God and the hope of everlasting happiness are greater than the blessings of health or prosperity, or any goodness of God to men in this present life. They ought, therefore, to have greater effects upon us. For, as the Apostle says, if Christ died for us, he died not that we should live at liberty to ourselves, but that we should live to him, as his servants, whom he loved and gave himself for. We shall know, that "he gave himself for us, that he might redeem "us from all iniquity, and purify us for himself, "as a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Particularly, "we should walk with all lowli- "ness and meekness, with long-suffering, for- "bearing one another." For this is to walk worthy of those great blessings to which we are called. For it is plain, that he, who has these great hopes, and these great blessings from God, which the gospel brings, may very well despise, DISC. XXIII.

DISC. XXIII. or bear with patience, ſmaller diſadvantages in this life. He, who has the hope of everlaſting happineſs, cannot contend unreaſonably for the advantages of this world. He will forgive others, as God, for Chriſt's ſake, has forgiven him. He will be merciful, becauſe he has received mercy. He will ſpeak evil of no man, but will ſhew all meekneſs to the faults of others. For he muſt know, that it is only by the mercy and kindneſs of God to him, that he is either happier or better than others. He will not be like that ſervant, who, when his lord had forgiven him ten thouſand talents, went out, and met with one of his fellow ſervants, that owed him an hundred pence; and, not conſidering the favour he had found himſelf, he laid hands on him and took him, and ſaid, pay me what thou oweſt, and was not moved to compaſſion by his entreaties. It is want of gratitude to God, if Chriſtians are not kind to men: and the ſame principle of thankfulneſs to God for his bleſſings, it is plain, will be the means to make us obſerve our duty in all other reſpects,

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and to do whatever we know is agreeable to God our heavenly Father, or that he requires of us. DISC. XXXII.

This is the end for which the goodneſs of God in the goſpel is intended. It is for this reaſon that the mercy of God is declared in general in the goſpel; that we may receive it by repentance, and by accepting it as his free mercy, with gratitude and love to him for his goodneſs. If it is without theſe effects, we ſhew ourſelves unworthy of it: and, though we come to it in appearance and in name, yet we ſhall be refuſed, when Chriſt himſelf ſhall come to ſee his gueſts, and to know who is worthy of him.

Let us, therefore, conſider the goodneſs of God, and endeavour to walk worthy of it. If we have the grace of God within us, let us ſhew it to all the world, by bringing forth the proper fruits of good living. The divine bleſſings promiſed in the goſpel ſhould produce the beſt effects.

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effects. The forgiveneſs we have received of God ſhould be the well-ſpring of love towards him; of juſtice, mercy, and all good works to men. It ſhould purify our hearts and mend our lives. But no grace or mercy of God is ſuch, but we may fall from it by our own neglects. He, that is made whole, may ſin again, may fall into a ſtate of wilful ſin; and he, that was once wicked, may turn to his wallowing in the mire. "Let him, therefore, who thinketh he ſtandeth, "take heed, leſt he fall."

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THE UNJUST STEWARD.

LUKE XVI. 10, 11, 12.

He, that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much; and he, that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much. If, therefore, ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And, if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?

FROM theſe words, which are the concluſion of the parable of the unjuſt ſteward, it appears plainly, that the deſign of that parable is to teach

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teach us, that we are ſtewards to God of the things of this life, entruſted with them in order to do good to others and to ourſelves; which is the account that will be required of us; that the things of this life are the means put into our hands of obtaining everlaſting life and happineſs. But, if we do not uſe them, as is expected, and as we are taught, then we forfeit that everlaſting happineſs which was propoſed to us.

In my diſcourſe upon this parable, I ſhall obſerve one thing, that, though the particular deſign of it is againſt too great a love of worldly things for our own uſe and advantage, and to teach us that to be charitable and good to others is the beſt means of promoting our real good in another life; yet the general force of the parable would teach us, to make a right and good uſe of worldly things in other reſpects; uſing them, as our duty requires, with moderation, gratitude, and thankfulneſs to God; or making them in general the means of performing our duty; the reward of which

which will be an everlaſting life and happineſs hereafter. And this I obſerve, not to leſſen or to contradict what is the particular deſign of the parable, but to make it more uſeful, being in this ſenſe applicable to all. For though all have not riches, or ſuch a ſhare of worldly things, from which they can be bountiful; yet all receive bleſſings from God continually, which they may uſe with duty and thankfulneſs to him; and make them, by a right uſe, the means of obtaining either greater bleſſings in this preſent life, or in the next. And in this ſenſe it is obſervable, that even the ſufferings or afflictions of this life ſhould be conſidered as coming equally from God, and as part of that portion which we receive from him; and which it is in our power ſo to uſe, that theſe, as well as the outward bleſſings of this life, may be a means of obtaining the everlaſting happineſs of another world. For ſo they will be, even more than the bleſſings of this life, if they teach us to draw our affections and deſires from this world, and if we bear them with content-

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ment,

DISC. XXIV. ment, patience, and ſubmiſſion to God's will, which is one great trial of the ſincerity or ſtrength of our duty to God; as proſperity and worldly bleſſings are another: becauſe both theſe, in a great degree, are apt equally, though in a different manner, to poſſeſs our minds, and leſſen our duty and ſubmiſſion to God: and, in this manner, by conſidering this life itſelf in the whole of it, as a charge put into our hands, which we may uſe to our everlaſting happineſs or the contrary: by underſtanding this we have, I think, the true uſe and inſtruction of this parable.

We muſt obſerve, beſides, the goodneſs of God, which is repreſented to us ſo well in this parable; and the other excitement which is employed to provoke us, to take the right and true care of ourſelves, from the example of wicked and worldly men, who, in their way, and for the periſhing and unworthy advantages of this life, take more pains, and are more ſteady and prudent, than thoſe

those who have the true and everlasting good and happiness in their expectation and view. DISC. XXIV.

What I shall observe principally at this time is what is said in the conclusion of the parable; that the things of this world are indeed little; that the riches, or the mammon of this world, are deceitful and false; for that seems to be the meaning of unrighteous, and that it is another's, or not properly our own, being only entrusted to us, upon certain conditions, and for a time. And, on the contrary, that there is another good and happiness, which is truly great, which is real, and will be our own. This is what it may be useful to explain: for, as to the argument which our Saviour uses, that, "if we are not faithful in "what is least, it is not to be expected that we "shall be so in what is greater; and that, if we "are not true in what is another's, we cannot "expect that any will give us what shall be our "own;" the force of this will be clear and strong, if we remember that it is the *trial*, which

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DISC. XXIV. is ſpoken of; and this is always juſtly made firſt in leſſer things; and, if we are not found faithful, or if we do not anſwer the juſt expectations in theſe, it is not to be expected that we ſhould have more: and he, who will not be a good ſervant, it is a common obſervation, will not be a good maſter; nor will he be either worthy or fit to have any riches or ſubſtance of his own.

But what is the difference between the good or happineſs of this world, and that of another life, which is ſet before us, and which ought conſtantly to be in our view and in our thoughts? For this is ſaid to be great and true; and the other inconſiderable and deceiving. How ſhall we beſt underſtand and conceive this difference? Let us conſider only at preſent, that that, which is ſaid to be great and true, comes from God more immediately, or that he himſelf is more the foundation of the good and happineſs of another life; whereas, in this life, the good or the happineſs which we have is ſuch as comes from that power

power which God hath given to other things, to give ſome degree of happineſs and ſatisfaction, but not the greateſt or the true. The things of this world, which are the foundation of the happineſs of this life, are themſelves weak, imperfect, uncertain, and deceiving: the happineſs itſelf, therefore, muſt be ſo too. It cannot be more than the power, and the duration, and firmneſs of the things themſelves. But, where God himſelf is the foundation of our happineſs, it muſt then be everlaſting, as he is; and it will be ſo, if he has promiſed it. And the power of God, and his ability to give happineſs or ſatisfaction is infinite and without bounds. "In his preſence, "therefore, is the fulneſs of joy." But we muſt not conceive that this is only what God will give or impreſs upon us, without our own actions, or employment of our thoughts and affections upon him. But we muſt underſtand that God is all truth, all order, all perfection and goodneſs: and, if any of theſe things pleaſe us now, as they do every one in ſome manner; (for every one is

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pleaſed with truth and goodneſs, wherever it is ſeen) from this we may conceive, in ſome meaſure, what happineſs and ſatisfaction will ariſe, when God will open himſelf to us, and ſhew us, as far as we can conceive, the infinite riches and perfection of his nature. One thing we may know, that this is ſo infinite, that it will be always new; there will always be new diſcoveries of his power, his perfection, and goodneſs. So that the happineſs of another life, as it depends upon the knowledge of God, will always be increaſing and new; for of his perfections there is no end or meaſure. Thus it is in reſpect of God. But we are allowed, and 'tis natural to us to conceive, that a great part of the happineſs of another life will ariſe from the company, the ſociety of juſt and good men made perfect; *i. e.* freed from thoſe imperfections and infirmities, to which even the good are ſubject in this life. We ſhall ſee the image of God, the reflection of his goodneſs in them: and, as they will be our equals and companions, we may conceive what pleaſure and

happineſs

happineſs muſt neceſſarily ariſe from ſuch a ſociety. We ſhall ſee and live with the beſt of men, that have been in every age of the world; and among theſe we ſhall ſee our own friends; or thoſe whoſe goodneſs we have ſeen in this life. Now this is true happineſs, as we may eaſily conceive: and we can only add to this, that ourſelves will be free from imperfections and infirmities; not only from the weakneſſes of the mind, or diſorders of the affections, but from all other weakneſſes, ſuch as ariſe now in this life from theſe bodies, to which we are ſubject. Our bodies themſelves will then be perfect; (for they will be changed, as the ſcripture has taught us plainly and expreſsly) they will be freed from ſickneſs, from diſeaſe and pain. They will be fit inſtruments of our mind, and helps to our happineſs, and not clogs and incumbrances, as they are often, and, in ſome meaſure, always in the condition of this life. DISC. XXIV.

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So great and true is the happiness of another life, which is declared and promised to us, in which therefore we cannot be disappointed or deceived. This is that substance, that possession and good, which, our Saviour says, will be our own: whereas, what we have at present, whatever it is, is another's; *i. e.* it is lent or entrusted to us, and put into our hands, to be the means, as he teaches us, of gaining, by the right use of what is present, this other good, which will be everlasting and firm. It is in this sense it will be our own. For in another sense, if it is the least our own, and if it depends more upon God, and is more immediately his gift, and his blessing and favour, it is on this account the more desirable: for how can we have any happiness but from him, on whom our life and our being itself depend continually? Or what other happiness can we desire so much, as that which will arise from the sense of his favour, and the knowledge and sight of his infinite perfections, his beauty and goodness?

Now

Now this present life, and whatever belongs to it, our Saviour teaches us, is put into our hands, as the means by which we may obtain this future happiness in another world; which is so great, so true, and will be everlasting and our own. This exchange our gracious Lord will give us for the vain, and perishing, and uncertain things of this life, if we use them according to his will, and as he has taught us. We see how much we shall be gainers by the exchange; so gracious is that Lord and Master whom we serve: such is the overflowing goodness with which he deals with us. He does not consider what the things which we give him are worth. He rewards us according to his own bounty, and not the worth of what we give, or the merit of our service. For we must consider that what he requires of us is his own, or his gift. But he reckons it our's, and will pay us infinitely, if we either bestow or use what he has given as he desires.

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He allows and invites us to ſeek and to aim at our own true good and happineſs, and to do this even by the means which he has put into our hands. He does not in this parable require what is his own right, that whatever we do ſhould be done out of duty to him, and upon his own account; but he requires that we ſhould purſue our own true good and happineſs, which muſt be that which he will give us in another life. To excite us to this, he ſets before us the induſtry, the reſolution, and prudence of worldly men in their way, and according to their notions and purſuits. He ſays, You ſee what worldly men will do for their own ends: how conſiderate they are and how prudent, in order to obtain the ſhort and periſhing advantages of this life. They are wiſe and prudent to obtain the vanities of this life, which ſoon fly away or periſh in their hands. This is in ſome degree the caſe of moſt of us. We take pains and form regular ſchemes and projects to obtain whatever it is, that our hearts are ſet upon. Let us uſe the ſame diligence

gence to obtain what is worth all our desires, the service of our whole life;—a real and everlasting happiness. DISC. XXIV.

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THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE.

MATTHEW XIII. 45, 46.

The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman, seeking goodly pearls; who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

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THE kingdom of heaven, of which our Saviour ſpeaks in this place, is the doctrine of the goſpel with its bleſſings and advantages: and in this parable he teaches us, that it is beyond all other bleſſings and advantages which we can find. He ſeems to ſuppoſe, in this parable, that we are ſearching or enquiring for ſomething that is good:

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for every one in this life is ſo more or leſs; though ſome, indeed, are very inconſiderate, and live by what is preſent, without ſearch of any thing better; yet even this is by ſome perſuaſion, that what they follow is good for them, at leaſt for the preſent life. But ſome there are, who, ſeeing the vanity of many of thoſe things which they purſue, are enquiring or ſearching for ſomething that is better: and it is concerning theſe that the parable ſeems chiefly to be intended: for ſuch men are like the merchant-man ſeeking goodly pearls; they want to know what is good, what it is that will make them happy in this world; or, if this cannot be, what there is that will ſecure their happineſs in another life. If they go on far enough in this ſearch, they will find that it is not the pleaſures or advantages of this world, that will make them happy in the preſent life; much leſs will theſe carry them with any hope or comfort into another life. They will, therefore, come to think of other things, as the means of true good and happineſs. They will come to think DISC. XXV.

DISC. XXV. think that they cannot be happy in this world, without being ſecure, or having ſome good hope, of their everlaſting ſalvation; which is of more concern than this ſhort and paſſing world. And if it is ſo, if the happineſs of this life and of another, are joined together; I mean true happineſs and true ſatisfaction (for who can be truly happy, who has no hope but in this uncertain world, or who has reaſon to fear what will become of him hereafter?) I ſay, if the happineſs of this and of another world are joined together, and can be had only by the favour of God, and by knowing that we ſhall be accepted by him; how ſhall we know this; upon what grounds can we be ſure of ſo great an hope? Here it is that the doctrine of the kingdom of heaven will ſhew its excellence, and will appear to be, if we duly conſider it, *that pearl of great price*, which we ſhall do wiſely, when we find it, if we are willing to part with all other things, as far as is neceſſary, to obtain this one, that will be ſufficient for us. For the doctrine of the goſpel, the word

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of God concerning our ſalvation, as it is in the ſcripture, will ſhew us effectually, and to our greateſt ſatisfaction, the means of obtaining God's favour and mercy, upon which our happineſs muſt depend, and what thoſe means are, by which we may be aſſured of God's mercy and favour. This is what I ſhall endeavour to ſhew. DISC. XXV.

1ſt. And, firſt, the goſpel teaches and ſhews us moſt plainly that, when we lay in ſin and miſery, God ſent from heaven his own Son, to take our nature upon him; to live in perfect innocence and obedience, and at laſt to die for our ſakes, to obtain eternal redemption or forgiveneſs for us. Now it is plain that, when this is done, we cannot doubt but we may be able to obtain that favour and mercy of God, without which we cannot be happy, having no aſſured hope of our ſalvation hereafter. We cannot doubt of God's favour and mercy, when he has ſent his own beloved Son into the world, to live *with* us, and to die *for* us. There can be no plainer

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plainer proof of God's kindneſs and readineſs to receive us than this is: there cannot be a greater inſtance of love and kindneſs, than this itſelf is: ſo that we may ſay with the Apoſtle, "he, who "gave us his own Son," ſending him into the world for our ſake and our benefit, "how will he "not with him freely give us all things?" We can no longer doubt of God's mercy and favour, if we ourſelves, as far as God will give us power, do what is required of us. We may believe at leaſt that God will ſhew infinite love and kindneſs to his own Son, who lived with him before the world was made, and who did his will in coming into this world. God has declared that in him, that is, upon his account, he is well-pleaſed, and ſatisfied towards men. He has given him a kingdom from among men; that is, all thoſe, who will receive his mercy, and live ſuitably to it. God has given him power to ſave for ever all thoſe who come unto him. For his ſake, therefore, we may hope that God will make us happy in his kingdom hereafter; that we ſhall

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be delivered from the punishment of our sins, and be made happy for ever. And this is the first and great means of our salvation, which the gospel teaches us; and which is done for us by God himself, or by him, who is our Saviour and deliverer; in whom we have more reason to trust, without doubting of so great favour and love of God, than we could have, if it was expected that we should first obtain it and deserve it ourselves. DISC. XXV.

2dly. To be convinced that it was not in our power, by any means, to obtain or to deserve such mercy and favour, to be sensible of this, is the means of obtaining it, which the gospel requires on our part. Now the means, which God has used to reconcile us to himself, and to save us, shew plainly, that it could not be done by ourselves, or by any other means. If God sent his own Son from heaven, can we think that this would be without some great need, or that we ourselves could have done the same thing? If

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DISC. XXV. we could obtain our own ſalvation ourſelves, this great thing would not have been. And as it is reaſonable, ſo it is neceſſary, to think, that we ourſelves are not able to ſtand in judgment before God; but that we wait his mercy and his own redemption, which he has declared to the world, to teach us humility and thankfulneſs to him. "The whole," as our Saviour ſays, "have no "need of a phyſician;" nor could we have need of him, if we were able to ſave ourſelves. We muſt, therefore, be ſenſible of this; we muſt conſider what our condition is. For no one can believe that he ſhall be ſaved, till firſt of all he ſees that he is loſt; that he is a ſinner; and that he is juſtly under the wrath of God, which is declared againſt all unrighteouſneſs and ſin. This, therefore, is required of us, or on our part: and what God has done, as I ſaid, his uſing ſuch extraordinary means for our ſalvation, muſt ſhew us what our condition is; how miſerable and how ſinful we are. But we muſt look into ourſelves, and conſider both together. What the righteouſ-

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neſs and holineſs of God require of us, and how much ſhort we are in every part, this is true of all of us. For the law of God and the holineſs of his nature require, that we ſhould "love him "with all our heart, and with all our mind, and "with all our ſoul; and that we ſhould love our "neighbour as ourſelves." The law of God is ſpiritual; it reaches to our hearts and minds; it is not ſatisfied with the outward performance of worſhip to himſelf, or outward acts of kindneſs to men; but it requires the mind itſelf, and the affections of our hearts, as due to him, and, for his ſake, to our neighbour. By this rule, therefore, we ſhall find, that, if we were good to men, yet in the inward affections we are imperfect: and that, therefore, our beſt actions cannot ſtand in judgment before God. What then can we think, if we have no care nor endeavour to pleaſe God; if we live in continual and open ſins, blaſpheming his name, or neglecting his worſhip; if we are more ready to ſhew hatred and bitterneſs, than kindneſs and good-will; if we live in intempe-

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DISC. XXV. rance and luſts, what ſhall we think of our condition? What *can* we think, but that God will puniſh what is ſinful? And we have nothing that we can offer to make our peace. Our hearts are not pure, nor fit for God to receive; and we can offer him nothing elſe. If we know how ſinful we are, we ſhall know how great danger we are in. Then we ſhall fly from ſin, with all our ſtrength and endeavour, as from our ruin and deſtruction: we ſhall apply ourſelves, as far as we are able, to fulfil the law of God; to love him and honour him, as we ought; to do no injury or act of ill-will to any one, but to love our neighbour ſincerely, and to ſerve him, as we do ourſelves. We ſhall do this the more by the knowledge of the goſpel; becauſe this has ſhewn us the love of God, and requires that we ſhould be thankful for it.

It requires that we ſhould "walk worthy of "the vocation with which we are called;" and, as God hath ſhewn to men his love and mercy in

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so high a degree; that we should be thankful first, and that we should do all our duty in this world, upon account of the goodness which he has shewn, and the hope which he has set before us. Thus it is that the word of God teaches and requires all goodness from us, giving us, at the same time, the truest and strongest reasons for it: so that it is, indeed, an effectual means to save us, and will give us a sure hope; for by this we shall know it; by the fruits which it produces. If it makes us good, and just, and temperate, and sober, then we may know that we are in the grace and favour of God, and have a sure hope of everlasting happiness hereafter. DISC. XXV.

It is at all times proper for us to consider the state of our souls; more especially before we come to the holy sacrament. We there commemorate the death of Christ, who was the sacrifice and atonement for our sins, and those of the whole world. "Surely," as the prophet Isaiah says, before he came, "he hath borne our griefs, and

DISC. XXV. "carried our ſorrows: for he was wounded for "our tranſgreſſions; he was bruiſed for our ini- "quities; the chaſtiſement of our peace was "upon him, and with his ſtripes we are healed. "All we, like ſheep, had gone aſtray; we have "turned every one to his own way; and the "Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us "all."

Our Lord and our God hath condeſcended to take on him the form of a ſervant, and to be made in the likeneſs of men; nay, to die as the worſt of malefactors, becauſe his creature man had ſinned. What an aſtoniſhing inſtance of the mercy and juſtice of God both together! Shall we not be moved, by this conſideration, to hate and to forſake all ſin; leſt we "crucify the Son "of God afreſh, and put him again to an open "ſhame?"

Let us ſeriouſly conſider the condeſcending goodneſs of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, on

on account of "us miſerable ſinners, who lay in "darkneſs and in the ſhadow of death." Let us ſtrive to walk in his ſteps, who was our example as well as ſacrifice, and to imitate his divine perfections, as far as our infirmity and frailty will admit. For this purpoſe, let us implore daily the grace of the Sanctifier, to purify us, as he is pure; by which means only we can hope to be prepared for that bleſſed place, whither the forerunner hath entered for us, and hath already taken poſſeſſion in our name; even our bleſſed Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt. DISC. XXV.

DISCOURSE XXVI.

THE GOSPEL A LIGHT AND JOY TO THE WORLD.

EPHES. v. 14.

Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead; and Christ shall give thee light.

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THESE words, in this place, are used as an exhortation to all holiness, goodness, and purity of life; which the Apostle says, are becoming Christians. Ye were sometimes, says he, in the dark, as others; but now ye are light, or enlightened by God, "walk as children of light; and "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works "of darkness, but rather reprove them."

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We ſee, therefore, what uſe is made of this notion of the goſpel; which is ſo joyful, ſo great, and ſo comfortable altogether. It will, therefore, be proper to confirm it, by ſhewing how much the goſpel is repreſented in this way, and then explaining what good reaſons there are for this; and in what ſenſe it may well be called a light to the world; if by light is meant whatever is moſt comfortable, the moſt naturally rejoicing and welcome to mankind. DISC. XXVI.

Firſt of all, we may obſerve that theſe words, by the Apoſtle, are plainly taken from a place in Iſaiah, where the Prophet deſcribes before-hand the joy and bleſſing of Chriſt's coming into the world. "Ariſe," ſays he, "for thy light is "come, and the glory of the Lord is riſen upon "thee. For, behold! darkneſs ſhall cover the "earth, and thick darkneſs the people: but the "Lord ſhall ariſe upon thee, and his glory ſhall "be ſeen upon thee, and the Gentiles ſhall

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"come to thy light, and kings to the brightneſs "of thy riſing."

Accordingly we find in the New Teſtament, that Chriſt is called "a light to lighten the "Gentiles, and the glory of" God's people, "Iſrael." And Zacharias ſays, that, "by the "tender mercy of God, the dayſpring from on "high is riſen upon us: to give light to them "that ſit in darkneſs and in the ſhadow of death; "and to guide our feet into the way of peace." Thus the goſpel is ſpoken of in words, and it was agreeable to this, that, at the birth of Chriſt, when the angel appeared to the ſhepherds by night, a light, or glory, ſhone round them: and eſpecially it was agreeable to this, that God ſhould chooſe, by the leading of a ſtar, to direct the wiſe men, who were Gentiles, to find him: for this was to ſhew, that he was indeed appointed to be "a light to the Gentiles, as well as the "glory of his people Iſrael."

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It was what Iſaiah had foretold; "that the Gen- DISC. XXVI.
"tiles ſhould come to his light, and kings to the
"brightneſs of his riſing." And we may ſee from this, that it is not St. John only of the Apoſtles, who calls the goſpel by this name. But it is he, who uſes this way of ſpeaking the oftener, as we ſee in his Epiſtles, and in the beginning of his Goſpel; where he ſays, that "Chriſt "is that true light which lighteneth every man "that cometh into the world," without diſtinction of Jew or Gentile. So much, therefore, the ſcripture loves to ſpeak of the goſpel, or of Chriſt's coming, in words that are the moſt welcome, comfortable, and naturally joyful to men. I ſhall now conſider what good reaſons there are that it ſhould be thus ſpoken of, and be thus conſidered by us.

The firſt great reaſon, why the goſpel ſhould be ſpoken of in the moſt joyful words, and be conſidered by us, is that it brought us the beſt and moſt joyful tidings that the world

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ever heard; which is the assurance of God's forgiveness to men, and his favour both in this life, and beyond this life in another world. In this respect, before this time, or except what light there was from the beginning by God's revelation and assurance to men, the world was indeed in darkness; *i. e.* not only in ignorance, which is one part of what is meant by darkness, (according either to the scripture or natural use of the word) but in ignorance of what it most concerns men to know, and such an ignorance as must have with it an uncomfortable state of mind. For how unhappy must it be to know only that we are sinners, unworthy of God's mercy, at least of his favour; which the natural conviction of men's conscience will teach them; and not to know what God will do with us, whether he will be reconciled or forgive us, whether we may, by any means, obtain his favour in this world only; and even, if this could be obtained, or we could be satisfied about it, and find comfort and pleasure enough in this world, yet to be despairing or without

without any clear hope or certainty as to another life? I ſuppoſe that men will ſometimes, or in ſome part of their lives, be brought not only to a ſenſe of their duty toward God and men, but a conviction too of this, that puniſhment belongs to guilt and to ſin; that, if this might be expected from men, it may much more be expected from God, who muſt needs be as juſt as he is merciful, and cannot but have an averſion and hatred to every thing that is wicked or ſinful. For if men have a juſtice, an indignation and abhorrence of what is ill; if this belongs and even moſt to the beſt of men; (for thoſe, who have no hatred of what is ill, are not good, but negligent and careleſs) how much more muſt it belong to God, to have an abhorrence and hatred of ſin? How true muſt it needs be, that he is not ſuch an one as ourſelves; I mean, when we are negligent and careleſs of what is done either good or bad? That he is indeed "of purer eyes than "to behold iniquity," or any wrong without diſapprobation and anger? To fear God's juſtice, DISC. XXVI.

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therefore, and his juſt puniſhment, is natural to men; notwithſtanding that many, in ſome part of their lives, may have no thought or conſideration concerning this, and that ſome may be hardened to the end, which is not the natural ſtate of men. And we ſee from the hiſtory of the world, that men always had this notion of God's juſtice and of their own guilt and ſin. And upon this account, the heathens were anxious how to pleaſe God, how to atone or ſatisfy him: and this made them offer ſacrifices continually, which could not however take away ſin. They endeavoured to ſatisfy God by all means, and were ready to "give the fruit of their body for the "ſin of their ſoul." We ſhould at this time, no doubt, be in the ſame darkneſs; *i. e.* in the ſame ignorance, or the ſame deſpair or diſcomfort, if it was not for the light of the goſpel. This has taught us that God is now ſatisfied: for theſe were its good tidings, "peace on earth, the "good-will of God towards men." And this is ſo far true, that, even among Chriſtians, where the

the gospel is not truly preached, or where its good tidings are in some measure hidden and concealed from men, either by ignorance of what is truly good, or for the bad purposes of those who choose still to keep men in darkness; even there still we see that, with much sinfulness and wickedness, superstition and fears, and endeavours of pleasing or satisfying God by vain means, prevail. For so it is in most countries of Christians, where prayers to saints are made, because Christ is not thought to be sufficient; and bodily penances and sufferings are used, because it is not considered that God requires only the service of our will and heart. But from this darkness we are delivered by the gospel's clear shining light. For by this we know that God is, indeed, reconciled for past sins, and always ready to receive us: that we need not wash our sins by water, nor by rivers of oil; that we need not offer any sacrifices but those of a contrite and penitent heart; that God requires *a reasonable service*, that we should "offer up our souls and bodies, a holy, "pure,

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"pure, and reaſonable ſacrifice unto him." And this will bring us to ſee the other great reaſon why the goſpel ſhould be called a light or a comfort and joyful tidings to men.

2dly. The beginning of joy and comfort in the goſpel is, indeed, the hope or the aſſurance of mercy and forgiveneſs. Without this it would indeed be no comfort, but the contrary, to be told and taught that, as Chriſtians, we muſt live pure and holy and unblameable lives. But where mercy is promiſed, and aſſured to us, by God ſending his own Son into the world; where we know we ſhall not be judged rigorouſly, by ſuch judgment as no one could ſtand, or be juſtified by, before God; then the ways of holineſs and virtue, into which the goſpel leads us, are truly ways of peace, of joy and comfort, more than can be found in the ways of wickedneſs or ſin. This, therefore, muſt be reckoned always as the other great bleſſing of the goſpel; that it has taught us, and by God's mercy given us,

us, the greateſt encouragement to follow whatſoever things are pure or right, if there be any virtue, goodneſs, or praiſe, to think of theſe things. For theſe are, indeed, the beſt for ourſelves, and the beſt for our happineſs and ſatisfaction in this world; for by theſe we ſhall eſcape the miſeries, the vexation, and the ſhame, that always, more or leſs, follow upon ſin; we ſhall have the ſatisfaction to have our minds in good order towards God and towards men. We ſhall have more pleaſure in doing our duty with contentment, than the ungodly can have in worldly proſperity. For, it is certain, "that with "contentment godlineſs is equal to great gain;" and "a ſmall thing, which the good man hath, "is better than great riches of the ungodly." Now this, it is plain, that Chriſt came to teach us. He was, therefore, himſelf born in the greateſt poverty; and he lived ſo: and he told us, *who* are moſt bleſſed; that it is not the rich, or joyful in this world, or the great and mighty; but the poor, who are ſo contentedly; DISC. XXVI.

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DISC. XXVI. the pure in heart, the humble, the peaceful, and even the perſecuted; if it be for righteouſneſs' and goodneſs' ſake. It is ſo ever, and in the nature of things, that contentedneſs will be the beſt happineſs, or ſuch riches and proſperity as we can think that God gives to honeſt induſtry, goodneſs and thankfulneſs: and as to the wicked, vexation and unhappineſs is in their ways, and "the way of peace," of true happineſs, "they do not know." "They heap up "riches, and cannot tell who ſhall gather them." Becauſe their hearts are too much ſet upon them, it is miſery either to have them, or to loſe them. But poverty or riches are beſt enjoyed by thoſe who think and know of better things, who are inſtructed both to be raiſed and to be brought low, "both to abound and "to ſuffer need." For goodneſs and true religion will go through all, and will make us happy or ſatisfied in every ſtate and condition of this world.

So

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So that by giving us knowledge firſt of all of God's mercy and favour, and then by ſhewing us the true way to goodneſs and to happineſs together, *the gospel is indeed a joyful light to the world:* ſuch as gives us the true hope and proſpect of happineſs. And then to crown and perfect all, we know by the goſpel, that joy extends not only through this life, but that it goes farther to the hopes of another and better, when this ſhall be at an end: that though, therefore, it is true to ſay of this life, "Awake, thou that ſleepeſt, and ariſe from the "dead, and Chriſt ſhall give thee light:" for there is a death and darkneſs in the ways of ſin even in this life; yet hereafter it will be true in its full and perfect ſenſe: we ſhall awake from the ſleep to which we go, we ſhall ariſe even from the dead, and Chriſt ſhall give us light. He ſhall raiſe us from the darkneſs and ſleep of death, and we ſhall live with him in joy and happineſs for ever.

This

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This hope is the means of happiness in this life. This is what will carry us through afflictions and sickness, and this will support us in the hour of death, when all other comforts fail. So that the gospel is, indeed, the means of joy and happiness; and I have shewn from what things this joy arises, that we may not think it encourages us to be joyful, as sinful men are, or to run into riot and wantonness, or excess for pleasure; but that true joy is in the hopes of God's favour, in the contentment and satisfaction of a good life, and in the hopes and prospect of eternal happiness hereafter.

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CONFESSION OF SINS TO GOD.

MATTHEW III. 6.

And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.

"IN thoſe days," ſaith the Evangeliſt, in the beginning of this chapter, "came John the Baptiſt, preaching in the wilderneſs, and ſaying, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at "hand. Then went out to him Jeruſalem, and "all Judea, and all the region round about "Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, "confeſſing their ſins." Now we are not to imagine that this was a particular confeſ-

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sion, by every one, of all his sins to St. John. It is not likely that St. John would require this from any one, and it is plain it was not possible that this should be done by so many; and there is no appearance that it was so. But the people, being struck by John's call to repentance, looked into themselves; they saw and confessed that they were sinners, and subject to the wrath of God; from which they hoped to be saved, upon their repentance, by the mercy and kindness of God, which was now to be revealed, and for his sake, who was coming after, and was mightier than John, and who alone had power to forgive sins. What was requisite to true repentance, and to be forgiven, was to be sensible of their sins, and to acknowledge them before God; which is the thing that is required of every one of us. It is required that to God we should confess ourselves, and that we should be sensible how great sinners we are: which I shall, at this time, endeavour to shew.

And

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And first, in respect of God. How is it that we have performed our duty, our first and great duty, to God himself; which is "to love him "with all our hearts, and with all our minds, and "with all our strength," as our Saviour hath said? Our duty to God is to honour him, to serve him above all things, and above ourselves. How do we do this? Let us consider this as simply and as plainly as we are able. It is certain, that God is to be honoured above all other things, and above ourselves; because it is "he "who made us, and not we ourselves." And it is from him that every thing that is good comes. But how is it in our lives and in our hearts? Do we retain the sense of this duty, which we must acknowledge to be so; or do we perform it as we ought? I do not say who is there that *thinks* of God? We cannot help thinking of him, whether we will or not. But who is there that thinks of him as he ought? To think of him as we ought, is to think of him as being present with us every where, as a witness to every thing

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we do or intend to do? Do we then consider him in this light? Do we say to ourselves before-hand, Is what I am about to do, what God allows, or is it what he has commanded? If what we intend to do is according to his commands, do we do it because *he* has commanded it? Or do we not do even what he has commanded for other reasons; that the world may see it, as our Saviour says of those who prayed, or fasted, or gave alms, that they might be seen of men? So that if we do the things which we ought to do, perhaps we shall not do them for the right reasons, for God's sake, and because *he* hath commanded. But we do them for the sake of the world and for ourselves, that we may get honour; that we may be applauded by men; or that we may applaud ourselves. It is not religion, therefore, even when we do these things; and it is necessary that we should examine ourselves in them; that we may know ourselves and our true condition before God; that we may be sensible of our sins in order to mend and to be forgiven. It is necessary, as I have said, if we would

would do our duty to God, that we ſhould in all things regard and conſider him more than men or than ourſelves. But now we ſee that it is the world, it is men, that we ſerve or ourſelves, even when we do good. It is likely that the ſame maſters will teach us and will require us to do other things. The world will ſhew us all that is ſinful, and our own hearts will incline us to it, if God is not our true governor and our guide. That he may be our governor in all our actions as he ought to be, we ought to employ our thoughts about him as far as is clear and plain. We ought to conſider what he has revealed to us; that he is God; that he is infinitely perfect and above all. We ought to conſider of what is plain in all his works. He hath ſhewn his power, wiſdom, and goodneſs in all his works. We ought, therefore, continually to carry theſe things in our minds. With ſuch thoughts our lives would be a continual prayer to him; *i. e.* whatever we deſired to have, we ſhould deſire to receive it by God's mercy and his goodneſs to us. We ſhould DISC. XXVII.

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pray to him to keep us from all evil, becauſe every thing is in his power and in his hands. We ſhould not truſt to our own ability or our own ſkill, or to the aſſiſtance or power of men to give us what is good. But we ſhould pray to God, upon whom all depends. If we receive any good that we hoped, or avoid any evil that we had reaſon to fear, we ſhould thank God, and aſcribe it all to his goodneſs, who granted us that kindneſs, or preſerved us from that evil, that we might thank him; and that we might know his goodneſs, which is greater than all that he can give in this life. This will be the foundation of our religion and of all our practice. We ought to have a continual ſenſe and thought of God in whoſe hands we live; in whoſe power it is to preſerve or to deſtroy us. We ſhould pray to him, and truſt in him, and thank him for all good. For whom can we truſt to, but him; whom ought we to pray to or to thank, but him? Or, if we may aſk of men what is in their power, and thank them, if they are kind and favourable

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to us; yet the power which men have, and the inclination of their hearts, is from God. Such a knowledge and ſenſe of God's power and goodneſs muſt bring with it a deſire to pleaſe him in every thing, and alſo a fear to offend him, who is infinitely good and gracious. For, if we hope from his goodneſs, we muſt fear from his anger and juſtice, if we offend him. For theſe things imply one another; if we love God and have hopes of any good from him, we ſhall fear to offend him. So that if we do our duty to God, and if we have our thoughts rightly turned to him, we ſhall do whatever he requires, we ſhall avoid every thing that he has forbidden, and upon this account; we ſhall do every thing, firſt of all, that he has commanded, for his honour and for his ſervice in the world; we ſhall worſhip him before men, we ſhall attend his public worſhip and his ſervice; not for the ſake of our own honour, or the applauſe of men, but for the honour of God, that men may ſee our good works; and that, by our example, we may teach them,

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as much as is in our power, to join with us in glorifying God. We ſhall not keep away; "we "ſhall worſhip him, and fall down before him," and bow down our hearts in his preſence; we ſhall not at any time fail to honour what belongs to him; as his church; the day which he has ordered to be kept holy: we ſhall not profane his name; we ſhall keep it ſacred. We ſhall not profanely and careleſsly uſe it upon any occaſions: we ſhall not uſe it wickedly in curſes, in praying for ill to others or to ourſelves; ſuch madneſs there is, when men are far gone in wickedneſs. We ſhall never uſe his name with hypocriſy, or without being ſincere. And now even theſe things, I have ſaid, if we conſider ourſelves in the leaſt, and will reflect, will be ſufficient to ſhew us how far we are and have been from doing our true and whole duty to God, which is in the firſt place to be conſidered; that this may bring us all *to confeſs our ſins; i. e.* to confeſs them to God; to ſee and to own that we are ſinners and guilty before him. For this is firſt of all neceſſary to

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our repentance and eternal ſalvation. For we cannot be ſaved, nor forgiven, nor bleſſed by God, or endued with his ſpirit to ſtrengthen and enable us, till we firſt of all know and confeſs our own unworthineſs: then God, by his goodneſs, and for Jeſus Chriſt's ſake, will have mercy and forgive us; and, becauſe our duty is too difficult, now we are ſo eſtranged from God, and turned from him to the world and to ourſelves; if we acknowledge ourſelves ſinners, he will help and ſtrengthen us by his holy Spirit. "But "they that are whole," our Saviour ſays, "have "no need of a phyſician, but they who are ſick; "and he came not to call the righteous," he ſays, "but ſinners to repentance." DISC. XXVII.

Now indeed it may ſeem ſtrange there ſhould be any need of thought or conſideration to teach us that we are ſinners. But though our ſins are manifeſt, yet we chooſe not at all to think of them, but to forget them, when we are moſt wicked; when we know that we are ſo. We do not

DISC. XXVII. not chooſe to think of it at all. We chooſe to ſee the faults of others, and to ſatisfy ourſelves with conſidering that none are good; which is true. But this is no excuſe for thoſe who live in the wilful and habitual neglect and violation of God's laws. We ſhould then call ourſelves to an account every day; we ſhould examine our lives and hearts, and compare them with ſome rule, which to us Chriſtians can be no other than the rule of God's commandments. The holy ſcriptures are the rule which God himſelf has given, and by which we know that hereafter he himſelf will judge us; by which, therefore, at preſent, we ſhould judge ourſelves; by which we may know what our condition is, or what judgment God would paſs upon us, if he were himſelf to judge us; which we muſt endeavour to prevent, or to ſoften his ſeverity, by being reſolved to judge ourſelves; which is the only means to prevent his ſevere judgment.

Let

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Let us then examine our hearts and lives, where we are deficient; let us confeſs to God all our failings and ſinful neglects, and let us pray unto him for that aſſiſtance which he has graciouſly promiſed to all that aſk for it and depend upon it.

We are not *bound* to confeſs our ſins to one another, but we muſt all confeſs them to God; we ſhould pray to him for repentance and amendment; and we may then hope for the grace of God to aſſiſt us in a thorough change, amendment, and reformation of our lives.

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GODLY SORROW.

2 COR. VII. 10.

For godly Sorrow worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of; but the sorrow of the world worketh death.

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THE occaſion of theſe words was this; in a former Epiſtle to the ſame Corinthians, St. Paul had ſomewhat ſharply rebuked them for a crime which one of them had committed, and which the reſt had not diſapproved, or condemned, as they ought. Upon his rebuke they ſaw the crime, the crime of one of them, they were ſorry and humbled. This, we may think, would be a great

great ſatisfaction to him, and in this ſecond Epiſtle, he, therefore, ſays to them, that, if he grieved them by his firſt letter, he did not repent of having written it, though he had repented, having been ſorry when he thought he might have grieved them too much. "But now I rejoice," he ſays, "not that you were ſorry, but that ye "ſorrowed to repentance. For ye ſorrowed," ſays he, "with a godly ſorrow, that ye might "receive damage by us in nothing. For godly "ſorrow worketh repentance unto ſalvation, not "to be repented of; but the ſorrow of the world "worketh death." DISC. XXVIII.

You ſee, therefore, in theſe words, the difference that is made between ſorrow that is according to God; which is a ſorrow towards God, for our having offended him; that this brings us to repentance, which we ſhall never have reaſon to be ſorry for: it will bring us to ſatisfaction and happineſs even in this life; but the ſorrow of the world

DISC. XXVIII. world, or for worldly reaſons, worketh death; it is miſerable or without comfort.

But what I ſhall endeavour to do at this time is, to give ſome reaſons why we ought to be ſorrowful, above all things, for our having offended God; to ſhew the greatneſs of our offence, which is in general diſobedience, or forgetfulneſs of God, and which is enhanced by this conſideration,—that it is impoſſible for any man not to know God, and his duty to him.

I ſhall, therefore, begin with what St. Paul ſays in another place, (Rom. 1.) where he moſt plainly preaches repentance, and is preparing the way for the goſpel. "The wrath of God," ſays he, "is revealed from heaven againſt all unrighteouſ-"neſs and ungodlineſs of men, who hold the "truth in unrighteouſneſs, becauſe what may "be known of God is manifeſt in them; for God "hath ſhewn it unto them. For the inviſible "things of him, from the creation of the world,

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"are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the things "that are made; even his eternal power and "Godhead; ſo that they are without excuſe; be-"cauſe that, when they knew God, they glori-"fied him not as God, neither were thankful," or had the proper diſpoſition or affections to him.

We ſee the wiſdom, goodneſs and power of God in every thing that is in the world; in every herb or flower that grows under our feet; for they are all made with wiſdom, and with a beauty and exactneſs, that the art of men cannot imitate. Many of theſe in a particular manner, and all of them together, are made ſo as to be uſeful and agreeable to men. We ſee the wiſdom and goodneſs of God in the beauty and variety of creatures that are on the earth, that fly in the air, or ſwim in the water. They are made ſuitably to their way of life, and are all provided for in different ways that are ſuitable to them. Many of theſe are made plainly with

DISC. XXVIII. with a design that they should be useful or agreeable to us. We see the greatness, the wisdom of God most strikingly; so that they, who think the least, cannot but be affected by the greatness of the things. We see the greatness of God in the heavens above, in the sun, the moon, the stars, though we do not know what they are; they strike us with wonder, and with an awful sense of our great Creator, who has placed these great things so much above us. The sun, that warms and enlightens all the world, that knows his rising and his going down, shews his gracious power and wisdom that provided this great thing for us. When night comes, "the moon takes "up the wondrous tale," as one has said, and shews, or disposes us to think of, the wisdom and goodness of the Creator. The goodness and care of God to men and all his creatures are shewn, in that he sends us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness. These things are plain and obvious to reflect upon; but not the less important

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on that account. They shew us, that there is a God, whom we ought to worship, whom we ought to thank and praise for his greatness and goodness, which appear to us so plainly. The world itself could not teach us that he is above the world: but God himself has taught us this, by giving us that notion of him in our hearts. And, because we have this natural notion of him, all the things in this world serve to excite and raise it. Other creatures have it not in their natures, and therefore the things which are without cannot give it them. They are therefore without religion; they have not this sense which is above all others. But this is natural to man; we have this notion naturally in us, and every thing we see excites it. As natural as it is, when we see any work of human contrivance, when we see an house, where every thing is convenient and suitable to the use of man; when we see a picture, where natural things are expressed, as they are in nature, as natural as it is to say, that the stones did not place themselves in that DISC. XXVIII.

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order of themſelves, and the colours in a picture were not thrown together by chance, but ſome hand did this; even of the pooreſt reſemblance and likeneſs of any thing, we ſay ſome hand did it; ſo natural is it, when we ſee this world in its beauty and greatneſs, when we ſee any part of it, and conſider the beauty and fitneſs of any part; ſo natural is it to ſay, that ſome wiſdom and goodneſs produced theſe things. And this is *God*; who, we are taught naturally to think, is infinite or perfect in all wiſdom, goodneſs, and power. The knowledge of God, as the Apoſtle ſays, is manifeſt in us; "for God," ſays he, "hath revealed it to us;" hath revealed and given it to us firſt of all in our hearts. Then, "the inviſible things of God, his wiſdom and "goodneſs, are ſeen" from the make of the world; "being underſtood by the things that "are made; ſo that we are without excuſe, if, "knowing God, thus naturally and unavoidably, "we do not worſhip him, nor are thankful, "obedient, and dutiful to him." Then, beſides this

this notion of God, which is within our hearts, which is natural and unavoidable to us, by which we know our duty, to worſhip, to honour him, and to ſerve him; (I have not ſpoken yet of the knowledge of God's extraordinary providence and concerns with men, which we have by ſcripture, or by the word of God) beſides the natural notion of God, by which we know our duty to him, there is, at leaſt in perſons that are baptized in the name of God the Father, and his Son Jeſus Chriſt, and the Holy Ghoſt, as *we* have been; there is in all ſuch perſons a grace, a ſpirit of God, that moves in them at ſeveral times of their lives, and draws them to him by a ſenſe of his goodneſs within them, by which they are capable of loving him, and giving their hearts to him, more than naturally they would be. For the natural knowledge of God within us, and by his works, is the foundation of duty, of worſhip, and obedience: but his grace and his ſpirit within us is ſtill more: this is the foundation of love to him, and would lead us to be ac- DISC. XXVIII.

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quainted and to converſe with him by confidence in him and by prayer. And by theſe means, by theſe gracious calls of God in our hearts, we ſhould be happy even in this life; this grace would be increaſed continually, if we would perſevere in it; if we did not chooſe to give up this happineſs for every pleaſure or vanity that riſes in our hearts. We forſake God, and he forſakes us, and leaves us to our own ways, to every pleaſure or vanity that we chooſe inſtead of him.

It concerns us, therefore, above all things, to conſider in what manner we have lived towards God, this gracious Being, who has made himſelf known to us, firſt of all in our nature, and by his works, by which it is impoſſible for us not to know him, not to know his greatneſs and his excellence, as well as his goodneſs to us; that every bleſſing we receive comes from him: and one of the greateſt that we could have is this privilege that we have of knowing him, and being

being capable of his ſervice. We know that we ought to pray to him, to honour him, to give him thanks; that we ought to ſhew a regard to him in every word, and in every action of our lives; to abſtain, to refrain ourſelves, from every thing that is ill; to do with pleaſure every thing that is good; becauſe whatever is good, is agreeable to him. This is our bounden duty and ſervice, as we muſt needs perceive from the notion that we have of God. We know he is our maſter, our governor, our Lord. He has a right to govern and to command us; which no maſter or ſuperior upon earth can in ſo great a degree have. He is our creator, our maker; he gave us our life and our being itſelf; he preſerves it continually. But we do not live, as if we knew this. Other maſters, other lords, beſides him, have the dominion over us. Firſt of all, we ſerve ourſelves, our own paſſions, our own wills. Theſe direct and govern us. Our own honour, our pride, is above every thing elſe in the world to us: ſo little do we regard his right to be regarded firſt

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and above all things: ſo little do we conſider that all honour belongs to him only; that he has all excellence and goodneſs in himſelf; if we have any thing good or honourable in any degree, it muſt come from him; it cannot be our own. We do wrong and do injuſtice to God, when we claim to ourſelves what belongs to him only: and by theſe means, by throwing off his power, his dominion over us, we come to be ſubject to every thing elſe, that we can think can anſwer our ends or purpoſes. The world is our maſter, and every thing that can pleaſe or hurt us. And this we do, though God has the only right of dominion and government over us; though he is the moſt gracious and the kindeſt maſter; though he draws us by love and by his ſpirit, if we would receive him: which would make his yoke, his government, eaſy, and his burthen, his commands, light. He would give us an heart to love him and to ſerve him with pleaſure, which other maſters cannot give. Yet all this force and power of right, which he has over us, and all

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these charms of love and kindness, with which he draws us, we resist, and choose to go on in our own miserable ways, slaves to ourselves, and to every thing else in the world; though we can find no happiness in ourselves, and the world has none to give. We should consider, therefore, how great our sin is, and how guilty we are before God, when we neglect him continually, and have thrown off his power and his dominion over us, and when we have resisted so long his kind and gracious influences within us. DISC. XXVIII.

It may be, that by the favour of God we have been free from the troubles and difficulties of the world. We may have had time, and leisure, and advantage, by our education, to consider these best things, which are our privileges above other creatures, and in which the true honour and excellence of our nature consist. We may have been, more than others, free to consider these things. It is not that by any means, by any advantages, we can obtain a greater founda-

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tion of this knowledge than even the meaneſt creature has. It is the privilege of all men to know God naturally; for God has revealed it to us, as the Apoſtle ſays. We know that there is a God above; that he is perfect in all excellence, in wiſdom, in goodneſs, and in power. If we know, that he is thus infinitely wiſe, and juſt, and good, and almighty, we muſt be ſenſible, at the ſame time, that he alone deſerves all our worſhip, our love, and our fear, and all our affections. Thoſe, that have leiſure, and are releaſed from the neceſſity of conſtant care about worldly things; they have it in their power to ſee, more than others can, the particular inſtances of God's wiſdom and goodneſs, which appear in the world, and in every thing around us. Even this does not require much ſtudy; for the things are plain. The divine wiſdom and goodneſs, the marks of God in every thing, are plain. But beſides this, ſuch perſons are capable, or might be able to conceive better than others can, what true goodneſs and greatneſs are. For the thoughts

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of common and worldly people may, by their way of life, with leſs ſin, be deficient. And, when they are ſunk by worldly care and miſery, they may not ſo well be able to conceive what the grace and goodneſs of God are. But how do we uſe theſe privileges and advantages of leiſure, and a freedom from worldly care and worldly buſineſs? Sometimes we do not ourſelves chooſe to be free from theſe things, but give ourſelves up to them, when it is not neceſſary for us. Or, if we have leiſure and opportunities more than others can have, we uſe them to improve ourſelves in worldly things, without endeavouring to get this beſt knowledge to be at the head, and to direct every thing elſe. So that we are as much addicted to the world, as the more worldly are, but in another way. If we get this, it is of other things, rather than of thoſe which are the beſt; or, at leaſt, we do not make the right uſe of what knowledge we have. We keep our knowledge without the love of God. We do not conſider that ſince we know God, if we have had DISC. XXVIII.

DISC. XXVIII. had leiſure beſides to conſider his greatneſs and his goodneſs, we ought, for theſe reaſons, more than others, to fall down before him; we ought to keep him in our thoughts; we ought to pray to him; to thank him for his goodneſs to us; to think of him in every action; and to direct all our thoughts and endeavours to pleaſe him.

On the other hand, if it is our condition to be obliged to labour or pains, or to ſome care and buſineſs in the world, which every one is, more or leſs, though this need not hinder us from good thoughts, from the knowledge and practice of our duty, which God has put in every one's power; there are ſome advantages even in this: for our neceſſities, which we are obliged to provide for, might keep us from many temptations; from the great temptation and danger that ariſe from idleneſs and too much liberty and leiſure itſelf: we want ſome labour or buſineſs in this life, to employ our thoughts, and keep them from going aſtray;

astray; and God, therefore, has made it necessary for us: yet still in this way we choose the worst side: we do not set ourselves to keep God in our thoughts, as we might and ought to do; to begin with or to thank him, while we are in our work, or in our business, that he has given us hands or health to carry on our worldly affairs; we do not endeavour to think of what is good, or not to think of any thing that is ill; (which our business or work itself would help us to do) but we give up ourselves to worldly cares, and excuse ourselves from religion, because we say we have no time; though we have time for every thing else: or because we have not had instructions or the knowledge necessary to serve God and to please him. But of this, it is to be hoped, that in a country, where the scriptures are read, and the gospel is preached, we cannot be without some instruction and knowledge, but by our own great fault. Besides what the Apostle has said so plainly is more certain, that the knowledge of God is natural to us. God has made it DISC. XXVIII.

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DISC. XXVIII. to be so, that no one should pretend ignorance, but that all should be without excuse, if, knowing God, they do not worship him, and are not thankful and obedient to him.

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THE PENITENT RESTORED.

PSALM LI. 12.

Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free spirit.

THESE words shew, that sometimes, even in the Old Testament, the salvation that is spoken of, as the greatest blessing, is that of a right and good state of mind, proceeding from God's spirit and power; which is, without doubt, to those who consider it, the greatest blessing and happiness that can be desired. That this is meant here, we may see plainly by the whole design of this Psalm. For it is a Psalm of repentance, written

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written by David, after the commiſſion of his great ſins; the taking of Uriah's wife, and his contrivance to expoſe him to death. In this ſtate he knew better the happineſs and bleſſing of a good mind, by the miſery which he felt now from his ſin and guilt. He prays, firſt of all, for forgiveneſs, then for health, the reſtoration of his right ſpirit, which is ſalvation. "Have "mercy upon me, O God, according to thy "loving-kindneſs, according unto the multitude "of thy tender mercies, do away mine offences; "waſh me thoroughly from my wickedneſs, and "cleanſe me from my ſin. For I acknowledge "my fault, and my ſin is ever before me. Be- "hold, I was ſhapen in wickedneſs, and in ſin "hath my mother conceived me. But lo! thou "requireſt truth in the inward parts, and ſhalt "make me to underſtand wiſdom ſecretly. Thou "ſhalt purge me with hyſſop, and I ſhall be "clean, thou ſhalt waſh me, and I ſhall be whiter "than ſnow. Thou ſhalt make me hear of joy "and gladneſs, that the bones, which thou haſt

"broken,

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" broken, may rejoice. Turn thy face from my
" ſins, and put out all my miſdeeds. Make me
" a clean heart, O God, and renew a right ſpirit
" within me. Caſt me not away from thy pre-
" ſence, and take not thy holy ſpirit from me.
" Oh give me the comfort of thy health again,"
or, as it is tranſlated more truly in the Bible,
" Reſtore unto me the joy of thy ſalvation, and
" uphold me with thy free ſpirit. Then will I
" teach thy ways unto the wicked, and ſinners
" ſhall be converted unto thee. Deliver me from
" blood-guiltineſs, O God, thou, that art the
" God of my ſalvation, and my tongue ſhall
" ſing of thy righteouſneſs.

From all this conſidered together, it is plain, that as David, by commiſſion of ſin, had loſt his peace of mind, which could only be reſtored by forgiveneſs; ſo that, having loſt his right and good ſtate of mind, he was ſenſible that God only could reſtore this to him: for which reaſon he calls it his *ſalvation*. " Reſtore unto me the

" joy

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"joy of thy ſalvation," and uphold me, ſtrengthen, or eſtabliſh me, with thy free ſpirit; with thy ſpirit which will give new ſtrength and life, to walk in the ways of God with reſolution, with cheerfulneſs and joy; for that is the meaning of *free*. And it is in the ſame ſenſe, that the words *free* and *liberty* are uſed in the New Teſtament, where the Apoſtle ſays, "where the ſpirit of the "Lord is, there is liberty."

Now as we ſee ſo plainly that this is the meaning of ſalvation ſometimes in the Old Teſtament, that it means a right ſtate of mind proceeding from God's power and bleſſing, we need not doubt, but this is more likely to be meant and promiſed as a bleſſing, or as the greateſt gift and favour of God, in the New Teſtament; ſince it is a good rule in underſtanding the ſcriptures, that even the temporal things, which are promiſed to good men under the Old Teſtament, are now to be underſtood ſpiritually, and imply to us the promiſes of ſome ſpiritual and inward

inward good; which is better and nearer to our happiness. Now we know that under the Old Testament, besides these blessings, there were outward and earthly blessings promised with great clearness and certainty; such as deliverance from enemies, long life and health, rain and fruitful seasons, and other blessings of this kind: which all were fulfilled to them, in a particular manner, upon their obedience, and more constantly than, perhaps, they are now to Christians, who have other promises more plain and certain: but from these we can draw an argument for the hope of spiritual blessings under the gospel: that since the outward promises were made under the Old Testament and fulfilled; and the new covenant is now established, not upon these, but upon other and better promises, *i. e.* spiritual ones; (the promises of a more inward and real salvation) these also will be performed in the fullest and most perfect manner. That, therefore, the salvation, which is spoken of in the New Testament, is not only that of being forgiven, (though that is the DISC. XXIX.

DISC. XXIX. first, and cauſe of all the reſt) but it is that of being reſtored to that right and happy ſtate of mind, from which men are by tranſgreſſion fallen. That this will be by the ſpirit of God given to men, and will be performed in this life, in ſome meaſure, as well as more perfectly in the next; that God will conquer our enemies in this ſenſe, as he did theirs, and will bring them under our feet; *i. e.* our ſinful affections and paſſions; that he will be preſent with us, by his inward power and ſpirit, and reign within us, as he was preſent and among his people of old, by an outward and viſible appearance; that his dew and rain will be now that of his grace and power within us, to ſoften and to bleſs our minds with peace, contentment and joy, in whatever circumſtances we are;—I ſay the outward promiſes, which are ſo many, and ſo full, and ſo expreſs in the Old Teſtament, will have this uſe to confirm and ſtrengthen our belief and hope of truer bleſſings to be expected now by Chriſtians under the goſpel. But in the New Teſtament itſelf theſe promiſes

promiſes are more clear and plain. Though it is by degrees even in the New Teſtament, that we are brought from the outward things to the inward and ſpiritual. For the true nature of the goſpel was not fully known at firſt. And it was enough, that in the beginning they could ſay, that the great promiſes of the goſpel would be fulfilled in this; that, "being delivered from "the hands of our enemies, we ſhould ſerve "God without fear; walking before him in ho-"lineſs and righteouſneſs all the days of our life." In which words we ſee that the ſalvation of God was thought to conſiſt partly in deliverance from outward enemies; but ſtill the greateſt happineſs is implied to be in holineſs and goodneſs. But from the beginning of the goſpel plainly, the nature of the bleſſings and good to be expected appears to be more ſpiritual, more truly divine and heavenly, than as it generally appears in the Old Teſtament. This appears alſo through the whole of our Saviour's life, and in the conduct of heaven concerning it, as well as in his doc-

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trine. As he was himſelf without all worldly greatneſs, or worldly proſperity, ſo it was plain, that he could have none of theſe things to give. But his bleſſings, his *joy and ſalvation*, muſt be of another kind. And, therefore, the angel began, at his birth, to lead people, by degrees, to conceive in what things his deliverance and ſalvation would conſiſt. "Thou ſhalt call his name "*Jeſus*; for he ſhall ſave his people from their "ſins." His doctrine was moſt expreſs and clear, to teach us what true happineſs is; which he declared moſt fully, when he ſaid, who are the bleſſed, the happy; the poor, the meek, the good. He could not in his life-time ſo clearly tell his power to forgive and cleanſe, and to give his righteouſneſs and goodneſs; becauſe his divine power at that time did not appear. And he was to prove it by other things, that were outward and viſible, but ſuch as related, as nearly as outward things could, to our minds and to ourſelves. He healed the deaf, the blind, the lame; every ſickneſs and infirmity of body; to prove without

doubt ſome greater power; that he could ſave and heal the ſoul itſelf; that he could "make "a clean heart, and renew a right ſpirit within "us." But this was not to be in his life-time to ſo great numbers, nor in ſo great a degree. The reaſon of which was, that his life was his ſtate of humiliation and abaſement; and, therefore, the greateſt things were not then to be ſhewn; not till after his reſurrection and his aſcenſion into heaven, when all power would be given him in heaven and in earth. It was then we ſee thoſe other and thoſe greater miracles, which were ſhewn in converting the minds of men from ſin, and raiſing them, with a new life and ſpirit, to holineſs and goodneſs: we ſee that thoſe, who believed in him, were changed, had a new heart and a new mind. They had outward gifts and faculties beſtowed upon them, ſuch as ſhewed outwardly and to the minds of men, that the divine power was upon them. But all theſe outward powers and faculties were not only either for the uſe of the church at that time, or for the more

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more ſpeedy conviction of unbelievers. The greateſt uſe was to be outward ſigns and proofs of that inward ſpirit, and power, with which their minds were changed and bleſſed, and by which ours may be now. We ſee the evidence and certainty of this power of Chriſt plainly, in the firſt converts and believers; when "they "were all of one heart and of one mind, praiſing "God and having favour with all the people:" and we ſee it plainly in the doctrine of the goſpel, in what our Saviour ſays firſt, that they who ſhould belong to the kingdom of God, muſt firſt "be born anew of water and the Holy Ghoſt:" *i. e.* that they ſhould be changed by his ſpirit and power, by what is ſaid ſo plainly, that "the fruits of the ſpirit are love, peace, joy, "faith, patience, meekneſs, temperance;" and that the kingdom of God, the bleſſings of it conſiſt, "in righteouſneſs, peace, and joy in the "Holy Ghoſt."

There is, therefore, a ſpirit and a power of God in the goſpel. And it not only teaches us, which

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which we ought firſt to know, that a right and good mind is the greateſt bleſſing, but it has taught us, who is the giver and author of righteouſneſs and goodneſs; who it is, that can firſt forgive ſin, and then make the ſpirit ſound and right, and good. This is he, who came into the world to ſave and to bleſs us: he, who healed the blind, the ſick, and lame. He can cure all the weakneſſes and diſtempers of our minds. It is not too hard for him, and, therefore, we are not to deſpair. Nor can we be allowed to give ourſelves up to ſin and wickedneſs, as if we had no power to do the contrary. But we muſt remember, that, as God has demanded holineſs from us, ſo he has given us, at the ſame time, the power and the means of becoming holy. He, who believes that Chriſt came with power from God, and prays to him for his bleſſing and kindneſs, he ſhall be ſaved. He ſhall be ſaved in this life: firſt from ſin; which is the *true* ſalvation; which can be no more than continued and perfected hereafter.

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GOD THE CHRISTIAN'S SUPREME GOOD.

PSALM CXIX. 57.

Thou art my portion, O Lord. I have promised to keep thy law.

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THIS is a pious ſentiment, in which the Pſalmiſt declares, that he had choſen God as his happineſs; and, for this reaſon, had engaged himſelf to keep his law. It is plain, indeed, that this will always be the ſtrongeſt engagement to religion, and a good life, if we are perſuaded that our true happineſs in this life, and at all times, muſt come from him; that it muſt come from him more than from all other things; ſo that

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we can rely upon him, as the beſt foundation and hope of happineſs in this preſent world, as well as hereafter. We cannot, indeed, know what trials God may think fit to lead us into; or for what reaſon he may chooſe to give his happineſs and his joys but ſparingly in this life. He may think fit to lead us through much trouble and darkneſs; which may be neceſſary to beings, ſuch as we are, to keep us from the temptations of pleaſure and vanity. But ſtill, at all times, we ought to be ſatisfied, that at leaſt there is no foundation or ground of hope ſo good and ſo ſtrong as this; and that, therefore, it will be wiſe to have this always in our minds, and to be ſatisfied as much as poſſible, that our beſt hope of happineſs is in God and in his ſervice. That this is the moſt reaſonable and the beſt grounded hope, upon which we ought to live, and to go through this life ſteadily, as ſatisfied that we have made ſuch a choice as will not fail us.

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But what way is there in which we may ſee this eaſily and ſufficiently in the beginning of life; and carry this knowledge about us, and not depend for it on others? We ought to ſet out with this in our journey of life, and to ſee, in a plain and ſhort manner, that God is himſelf our greateſt good, and all-ſufficient for us; ſo that we may endeavour to pleaſe him, and to obtain his favour above all things. The chief thing, and what is neceſſary for this end, is to conſider what our notions are of God, which God himſelf hath taught us, but which require ſtill to be remembered and conſidered. He himſelf hath taught us, that he alone is all-perfect, that he alone has all goodneſs, and in himſelf the perfect power, whenever he thinks fit, to make thoſe happy who endeavour to pleaſe him. We ought always to know this, that God has infinite power, and infinite ſources of happineſs, which he will give in ſuch meaſure as he pleaſes. But we ought to have juſt notions of his power and his goodneſs. If we ſerve thoſe who are not able to do us good,

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we know our labour muſt be in vain. If we love things that are not able to give us pleaſure or contentment, we know that nothing but diſappointment can be the end of all our pains. It is, therefore, firſt of all, neceſſary, that we ſhould know what the power and the perfections of God are, by which he is able to ſerve us, to be our good and our happineſs, more than all other things, or than the whole world without him; which lies within our own minds: for God himſelf has ſhewn it to us not only by his word, but firſt of all by our natural notions of him, by which it may appear to us that he only is our happineſs and good; and that he indeed gives the contentment and ſatisfaction, when we think they come from other things. We ſee and experience, that, in the courſe of this world, he has appointed other things to be the means of good; and that he has made ſome neceſſary for our ſupport and preſervation in this life. At the ſame time, we ought to know and conſider, that the good even of thoſe, and the power they have to ſupport us, is DISC. XXX.

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is from God. It is by him that our food itself can nourish or do us good, or clothes and raiment keep us warm. We must think farther, that these, as all other things, are in God's disposal, and that he has promised we shall not want them: that, if "we seek first the kingdom "of God and his righteousness, all these things "shall be added to us." But the main thing is this; when we have the necessaries of life, or when we have more; when we have all the advantages, and conveniences, and pleasures of this world, even then, are these things enough? Have they power to make us happy? Is the power or goodness, that is in them, equal and sufficient to our desires, so as to be able to quiet and content our minds? I do not intend, at this time, to appeal to the experience of men; to what we may feel ourselves, or what we may see and observe in others, whom we do not see to be happy, because they have pleasures; nor to be contented or happier than others, because they are rich. What we are to consider is, whether

God is not the perfect good, ſo that with theſe things or without them, he could make up our perfect happineſs and contentment. I ſay, whether he could not alone be our ſupport, without theſe things which he has made neceſſary; and whether with them he is not the author of all their good, and the giver of happineſs, contentment, and ſatisfaction, which theſe things cannot give. To know God's power perfectly, we ought to conſider that it is in his power to ſupport and nouriſh us even *without* the means of life: that bread itſelf is not the neceſſary means of life, any otherwiſe, than as God has appointed it to be ſo: for, if he will, he can ſupport us by his power without it, or create what would be neceſſary, as our Saviour did, who made the bread to grow in his hands, ſo that thouſands were fed by a miracle. But this is only that conſidering what God *can* do, we may know that the bleſſing, and the power, which theſe things have to do us good, is what God has given them. He has given them power to nouriſh and ſupport us; but he has not given. DISC. XXX.

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given the power to food or raiment to make us happy; nor yet to any thing elſe, as pleaſures, riches, or power; all which are imperfect things, or inſufficient to anſwer to the deſires of men; I mean if they are not contented or ſatisfied by ſome other good. If theſe things are imperfect, yet God is not ſo. His power and goodneſs are infinite. He, therefore, can give contentment to the mind; he can give ſuch happineſs and ſatisfaction as are equal to the ſoul of man. It is he who gives the ſatisfaction which other things ſeem to give. But he has made thoſe things to be ſhort and imperfect, or he has made the minds of men greater than to be ſatisfied with what they give, or by the power of any thing in this world to do us good. While all things are imperfect, God only is the all-ſufficient and perfect good. His grace and his bleſſing within our minds are not ſhort and imperfect, but are equal and ſufficient to the happineſs of every man and of all together. He can give to the mind what contentment he thinks fit. His favour,

favour, therefore, whenever he pleaſes, is better and more than life itſelf and every thing that belongs to it. He can convey into our minds pleaſure and ſatisfaction without bounds, and more than any outward or worldly things can give. He can make "godlineſs to be great "gain," and "a ſmall thing, that the righteous "hath," he can make to be "better than great "riches of the ungodly." For God only is rich in goodneſs and in power; and his bleſſing alone can give a power and goodneſs to the leaſt things. And, as God is perfect, and can give us for the preſent what is ſufficient for us, he is alſo everlaſting; he can never fail, at all times and for ever he will be our God: when ſtrength, and health, and all things are fled, he can ſtill be our ſupport, and ſtrength, and happineſs. And, when this life is ſpent and gone, he can be our God in another world. And, though the world itſelf ſhall periſh and be deſtroyed, yet God is the ſame; "he is from everlaſting to everlaſting, and "his years cannot fail."

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Let us, therefore, remember this; that all theſe things which we ſee are vain and ſhort, and come to an end. But God only is the perfect and everlaſting good. It is in him, therefore, only, that we can have a remedy for all our imperfections and wants. And let us conſider the happineſs of the truly good and religious man in this reſpect, as having his ſhare or hope in all the perfections and power of God. They whom God loves, as we are certain he will all who worſhip and ſerve him in ſincerity; they will have their benefit in all God's power and perfections: they cannot, therefore, even be poor, becauſe their God is rich in every thing that is good. They cannot be weak, becauſe their God is ſtrong. They cannot be low and contemptible in this world, whom God loves and regards. But every thing is low and contemptible that is ſeparated from God, and has no hope and ſhare in him. They, whom God befriends, are not ſhort and periſhing, becauſe God lives for ever; and he will preſerve and bleſs them in another world.

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Their God is all; he is their perfect and ſufficient good. This we may ſee firſt of all, and then afterwards we ſhall the better and more eaſily take inſtruction, from what we find in ourſelves, or what we obſerve in others; of the vanity and weakneſs of all worldly things to make us happy. Our experience and the obſervation of every day will teach us more and more, that worldly pleaſure cannot make us happy; that worldly riches cannot make us ſo much as contented; and that every thing elſe is vain and imperfect. But religion itſelf will teach us this before-hand; becauſe it ſhews what is good, and in the view of that we can ſufficiently and beſt ſee the vanity and imperfection of all other things. DISC. XXX.

This, therefore, is the knowledge which every one ought to take with him in this life, and to keep firm and ſteady upon all trials, and even when appearances may be againſt it on the other ſide. For ſtill we ſhould hold this firm, that God

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himſelf is, when he pleaſes, our ſufficient good; he himſelf can make us happy and will; or, if we muſt not be made happy without the worldly means, it is becauſe he has made theſe to be means for wiſe reaſons, and ſuitable to the condition of this world. But even when theſe are the means, the happineſs they give, or the power they have to do us any good, is from *God*. This ſhould be remembered always. Then we ſhall conceive the eaſier, that even without theſe, when God takes them from us, if he takes away our health, our friends, or fortune, it is in his power to be himſelf inſtead of all theſe things. I ſay this is the right, the true knowledge of God and our happineſs, as depending upon him. And let us keep this firm, that we can never go any where elſe to ſeek for happineſs; but if we ſtand fixed to him, and ſteady in his ways, endeavouring to pleaſe him, we ſhall prevail. In this life he will be our good, more than any thing elſe can be. He will give his happineſs in ſuch meaſure, as he knows to be beſt. Though he has reſerved the

greateſt

greateſt for another life, he will not leave us deſtitute even now. If we cannot truſt in God, we cannot truſt in any thing in this world. It is plain, therefore, that he is the beſt and trueſt hope. He is our God, he is our perfect good. This is that one ſimple truth, that we ought always to remember. This is the knowledge that we may have from ourſelves. We do not want the world to teach us this. It is knowledge that is above the world, and will keep *us* above it; that will keep us free from its corruptions and entanglements. It is the knowledge that is in every one's power to have. It concerns us, therefore, to keep this ſteadily upon our minds, through the whole of life, that God is himſelf our trueſt happineſs. We muſt entreat him by prayer, we muſt endeavour to recommend ourſelves by our truſt itſelf and our dependence upon him; and by taking care to do every thing that we know is well pleaſing in his ſight. DISC. XXX.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.